THE ® saint MYSTERY MAGAZINE

SEPT.
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Edited by LESLIE CHARTERIS

The Liar
by WILLIAM FAULKNER

The Sheriff of Gullmore
by MELVILLE DAVISSON POST

Winner Take Nothing
by TALMAGE POWELL

The Silence of Steve Spangas
by AVRAM DAVIDSON

Melancholy Journey of Mr. Teal
by LESLIE CHARTERIS

Fatal Facsimile
A NEW STORY by FREDERIC BROWN

SOME OLD, SOME NEW — THE FINEST IN MYSTERY FICTION

Since I am just too lazy to write a new story every month for this Magazine, we often give you only a Saint reprint. I see nothing wrong with this, for not many people can have read all my stories. And books of all kinds, including my own, are continually being re-published for the benefit of those who missed them the first or second or umpteenth time around.

But just as a gown of Madame Pompadour would appeal to today's woman as a gorgeous and glamorous costume, whereas she would regard a five-year-o'd dress as merely unfashionable and probably frumpish, so there comes a period in the life of a story before it becomes a historical romance when it seems merely a bit dated and out of tune with the reader's subconscious standards of realism. And the more deceptively close it is in sty'e to the contemporary, the louder is the clash of an apparent anachronism. One doesn't expect D'Artagnan to call the other Musketeers on the phone, but it does seem odd when a character in modern dress can't think of a quicker way from London to New York than on the fastest liner. This is the awkward stage in which many early Saint stories are caught today, for after all I began writing them a third of a century ago.

My first thought in this situation was to revise the older stories, polishing crudities of style which I am now conscious of, changing outdated topical allusions, modernizing the mechanics of the action to conform with the timetab'es of today; and this I did with many of them. But presently I realized that that was no solution.

The polishing could be done—but was it worth the time and effort which could be devoted to writing something entirely new? The dated topicalities could be replaced by new allusions—but how long would it be before those were no less dated? And where would this modernizing ever end, once it was started? Wouldn't it have to be done over again every five or ten years, as the world must keep changing until its stupid inhabitants turn it into a cinder? And would the Sherlock Holmes stories be as durable if they had been translated from the idiom of hansom cabs to taxicabs to helicopters to a jet-powered anti-gravity belt?

So I have decided that early chapters of the Saga must be left as they were written. I only ask you to notice the dates that they belong to, and give them the respect due to ancient classics.

Leslie Charteris

THE saint MYSTERY MAGAZINE

SEPTEMBER 1962

VOL. 17, NO. 3

The Melancholy Journey of Mr. Teal .. 3
by LESLIE CHARTERIS

Fatal Facsimile 53
by FREDRIC BROWN

The Liar 63
by WILLIAM FAULKNER

The Sheriff of Gullmore 71
by MELVILLE DAVISSON POST

The Suitcase 91
by PAT McMAHON

Winner Take Nothing 96
by TALMAGE POWELL

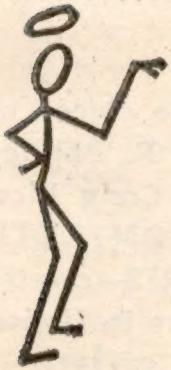
I Did It for—Me 101
by ED LACY

What's New in Crime 105
by STEFAN SANTESSON

The Silence of Steve Spangas 108
by AVRAM DAVIDSON

Ms. Found in an Attic 116
by MICHAEL AVALLONE

Along Came a Spider 119
by DON McKINNEY



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the melancholy journey of mr. teal

by . . . Leslie Charteris

NOW THERE WAS a day when the Saint went quite mad.

Of course, one might with considerable justification say that he always had been mad, anyway, so that the metamorphosis suggested by that first sentence would be difficult for the ordinary observer to discover. Patricia Holm said so, quite definitely; and the Saint only smiled.

"Neverwithstanding," he said, "I am convinced that the season is ripe for Louie to make his contribution to our bank balance."

"You must be potty," said his lady, for the second time; and the Saint nodded blandly.

"I am. That was the everlasting fact with which we started the day's philosophy and meditation. If you remember——"

Patricia looked at the calendar on the wall, and her sweet lips came together in the obstinate little line that her man knew so well.

In response to a hard core of readers who profess to prefer the earlier Saint stories to the latest ones, we have in the past (perhaps a trifle maliciously) reprinted two or three of his very oldest adventures, which I think shook them a bit—as they did me. But this story comes from the trilogy THE SAINT vs SCOTLAND YARD *in which I have always thought that he started to come of age. Here he is still boisterous and rambunctious, but not with quite such youthful extravagance. And he also faces an incidental adult problem—which, in spite of this episode, he never did clearly solve. For the reasons set forth in the Introduction to this issue, I have not tried to modernize or alter anything. Only Russians are allowed to keep on revising their biographies.*

L. C.

From: THE SAINT vs. SCOTLAND YARD
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"Exactly six months ago," she said, "Teal was in here giving such a slick imitation of the sorest man on earth that anyone might have thought it was no impersonation at all. Two of his best men have been hanging around outside for twenty-four hours a day ever since. They're out there now. If you think six months is as far as his memory will go——"

"I don't."

"Then what are you thinking?"

The Saint lighted his second cigarette, and blew a streamer of smoke towards the ceiling. His blue eyes laughed.

"I think," he answered carefully, "that Claud Eustace is just getting set for his come-back. I think he's just finished nursing the flea I shot into his ear last time so tenderly that it's now big and bloodthirsty enough to annihilate anything smaller than an elephant—and maybe that plus. And I'm darned sure that if we lie low much longer, Claud Eustace will be getting ideas into his head, which would be very bad for him indeed."

"But——"

"There are," said the Saint, "no buts. I had a look at my pass-book yesterday, and it seems to be one of the eternal verities of this uncertain life that I could this day write a cheque for ninety-six thousand, two hundred and forty-seven pounds, eleven shillings, and fourpence—*and* have it honoured. Which is very nice, but just not quite nice enough. When I started this racket, I promised myself I wasn't coming out with one penny less than a hundred thousand pounds. I didn't say I'd come out even then, but I did think that when I reached that figure I might sit down for a bit and consider the possible advantages of respectability. And I feel that the time is getting ripe for me to have that think."

This was after a certain breakfast. Half a dozen volumes might be written around nothing else but those after-breakfast séances in Upper Berkeley Mews. They occupied most of the early afternoon in days of leisure, for the Saint had his own opinions about the correct hours for meals; and they were the times when ninety per cent. of his coups were schemed. Towards noon the Saint would arise like a giant refreshed, robe himself in furiously patterned foulard, and enter with an immense earnestness of concentration upon the task of shattering his fast. And after that had been accomplished in a properly solemn silence, Simon Templar lighted a cigarette, slanted his eyebrows, shifted back his ears, and metaphorically rolled up his sleeves and looked around for something to knock sideways. A new day—or what was left of it—loomed up on his horizon like a fresh world waiting to be conquered, and the Saint stanced himself to sail into it with an irrepressible impetuosity of hair-brained devilment that was never

too tired or short-winded to lavish itself on the minutest detail as cheerfully and generously as it would have spread itself over the most momentous affair in the whole solar system.

And in those moods of reckless unrepentance he smiled with shameless Saintliness right into that stubborn alignment of his lady's mouth, challenged it, teased it, dared it, laughed it into confusion, kissed it in a way that would have melted the mouth of a marble statue, and won her again and again, as he always would, into his own inimitable madness. As he did then. . . .

"There's money and trouble to be had for the asking," said the Saint, when it was all over. "And what more could anyone want, old dear? . . . More trouble even than that, maybe. Well, I heard last night that Claud Eustace was also interested in Louie, though I haven't the foggiest idea how much he knows. Tell me, Pat, old sweetheart, isn't it our cue?"

And Patricia sighed.

When Frankie Hormer landed at Southampton, he figured that his arrival was as secret as human ingenuity could make it. Even Detective Inspector Peters, who had been waiting for him for years, on and off, knew nothing about it—and he was at Southampton at the time. Frankie walked straight past him, securely hidden behind a beard which had sprouted to very respectable dimensions since he last set foot in England, and showed a passport made out in a name that his godfathers and godmother had never thought of. Admittedly there had been a little difficulty with the tall dark man who had entered his life in Johannesburg and followed him all the way to Durban—inconspicuously, but not quite inconspicuously enough. But Frankie had dealt with that intrusion the night before he sailed. He carried two guns, and knew how to use them both.

And after that had been settled, the only man who should have known anything at all was Elberman, the genial little fellow who had financed the expedition at a staggering rate of interest, and who had personally procured the passport aforementioned, which was absolutely indistinguishable from the genuine article although it had never been inside the Foreign Office in its life.

Frankie had made that trip a number of times before—often enough to acquire a fairly extensive knowledge of the possible pitfalls. And this time he was reckoning to clean up, and he was taking no chances. The man from Johannesburg had bothered him more than a little, but the voyage back to England had given him time to forget that. And in the train that was speeding him towards Waterloo, Frankie thought ahead into a pleasant and peaceful future—with

a chalet in Switzerland, probably, and a villa on the Riviera thrown in, and an endless immunity from the anxieties that are inseparable from what those who have never tried to earn it call "easy money."

And so, perhaps, his vigilance relaxed a trifle on the last lap of the journey—which was a pity, because he was quite a likeable man in spite of his sins. Perrigo got him somewhere between Southampton and Waterloo—Perrigo of the big coarse hands that were so quick and skilful with the knife. Thus Frankie Hormer enters the story and departs; and two men have been killed in the first four pages, which is good going.

Of this, Simon Templar knew nothing at the moment. His absorbing interest in Mr. Perrigo, and particularly in Mr. Perrigo's trousers, developed a little later. But he knew a whole lot of other things closely connected with the dramatis personæ already introduced, for it was part of the Saint's business to know something about everything that was happening in certain circles; and on the strength of that he went after Louie Elberman in quest of further information.

The structural alterations along the south side of Upper Berkeley Mews, which had recently been providing the Saint with as much exercise as he wanted, were now completed; and by means of a slight elaboration of his original scheme, he was able to enter and leave his home without in any way disturbing the stolid vigil of the two plain-clothes men who prowled before his front door, day and night, in a variety of disguises which afforded him continuous entertainment.

At nine o'clock that night he went upstairs to his bedroom, slid back the tall pier-glass which adorned one wall, and stepped into a narrow dimly-lighted passage, closing the panel again behind him. Thus with his feet making no sound on the thick felt matting that was laid over the floor, he passed down the corridor between the back of the mews and the dummy wall which he had built with his own hands, through numbers 5 and 3—which highly desirable residences had already been re-let to two impeccably respectable tenants who never knew that their landlord had a secret right-of-way through their homes. So the Saint came (through the false back of a wardrobe) into the bedroom of No. 1, which was occupied by the chauffeur of a Mr. Joshua Pond, who was the owner of No. 104, Berkeley Square, which adjoined the corner of the mews. Mr. Pond was not otherwise known to the police as Simon Templar, but he would have been if the police had been clever enough to discover the fact. And the Saint left No. 1, Upper Berkeley Mews through another cupboard in the room at which he had entered it, and reappeared out of a similar cupboard in one of the bathrooms of No.

104, Berkeley Square, and so became a free man again, while Chief Inspector Teal's watchers went on patrolling Upper Berkeley Mews in an ineffable magnificence of futility which can't really have done them any harm.

This was one of the things that Perrigo didn't know; and the possibility that the Saint might have any business with Louie Elberman that night was another.

Perrigo had got what he wanted. It had been easier than he had expected, for Frankie Hormer had made the mistake of occupying a reserved compartment all by himself on the boat train. Perrigo walked in on him with some gold braid pinned to his overcoat and a guard's cap on his head, and took him by surprise. The trouble had started at Waterloo—a detective had recognised him in the station, and he had only just managed to make his getaway.

He reached Elberman's house at Regent's Park by a roundabout route, and morsed out the prearranged signal on the bell with feverish haste. The entrance of the house was at the back, in a little courtyard which contained the doorways of four other houses that also overlooked the Park. While he waited for the summons to be answered, Perrigo's eyes searched the shadows with the unsleeping instinct of his calling. But he did not see the Saint, for the simple reason that the Saint was at that moment slipping through a first-floor window on the Park side.

Elberman himself opened the door, and recognised his visitor.

"You're late," he said.

His pale bird-like face, behind the owlish spectacles, expressed no more agitation than his voice. He merely stated the fact—a perkily unemotional little man.

"I had to run for it at Waterloo," said Perrigo shortly.

He pushed into the hall, and shed his overcoat while Elberman barred the door behind him. Divested of that voluminous garment, he seemed even huskier than when he was wearing it. His jaw was square and pugnacious, and his nose had been broken years ago.

Elberman came back and looked up at him inquiringly.

"You weren't followed?"

"Not far."

"Everything else all right?"

Perrigo grunted a curt affirmative. He clapped his hat on a peg and thrust out his jaw.

"What *you're* talking about's O.K.," he said. "It's the follow-up that's not jake. When Henderson hears about Frankie, he'll remember the way I ran—and there's a warrant for me over that Hammersmith job already."

"You killed Frankie?"

All Elberman's questions were phrased in the same way: they were flat statements, with the slightest of perfunctory interrogation marks tacked on to the last syllable.

"Had to," Perrigo said briefly. "Let's get on—I want a drink."

He was as barren of emotion as Elberman, but for a different reason. Habit had a hand in Perrigo's callousness. In the course of his chequered career he had been one of Chicago's star torpedoes, until a spot of trouble that could not be squared had forced him to jump the Canadian border and thence remove himself from the American continent. There were fourteen notches on his gun—but he was not by nature a boastful man.

Elberman led the way up the stairs, and Perrigo followed at his shoulder.

"Did you get that ticket?"

"Yes, I got you a berth. It's on the *Berengaria*. She sails tomorrow afternoon. You're in a hurry to leave?"

"I'll say I am. I guess it's safe for me to go back now, and I know a dealer in Detroit who'll give me a good price for my share. I'll get enough to give me a big start, and I'll make it grow. There's no money in this durned country."

Elberman shrugged, and opened a door.

He took two paces into the room, and Perrigo took one. And then and there the pair of them halted in their tracks like a Punch and Judy show whose operator has heard the lunch-hour siren, the muscles of their jaws going limp with sheer incredulous astonishment.

II

"Come right in, boys," said the Saint breezily.

He reclined gracefully in Louie Elberman's own sacrosanct armchair. Between the fingers of one hand was a freshly lighted cigarette; the fingers of the other hand curved round the butt of a .38 lead-pump that looked as if it could do everything the makers claimed for it and then some. It was as unsociable-looking a piece of armament as Perrigo had ever seen—and he knew what he was talking about. The sight of it kept his hands straight down and flaccid at his sides, as innocuous as the fists of something out of a waxwork exhibition.

If further pictorial detail is required, it may be provided by mentioning that the Saint was wearing a light grey suit and a silk shirt, both of which showed no traces of ever having been worn before; and an unwary angel might have been pardoned for turning round and hurriedly overhauling its own conscience after getting one glimpse of the radiant innocence of his face.

But most of these interesting points were wasted on the single-track minds of the two men in the doorway. Their retinas, certainly, registered a photographic impression of the general homoscape; but the spotlight of their attention merely oscillated momentarily over the broader features of the picture,

and settled back in focus on the salient factor of the whole scenery —the starkly-fashioned chunk of blued steel that stared unwinkingly into the exact centre of the six-inch space between them, only too plainly ready and eager to concentrate its entire affection upon whichever of them first put in a bid for the monopoly.

"Make yourselves at home, boys," murmured the Saint. "Perrigo, you may close the door—how did you leave Frankie, by the way?"

Perrigo, with one hand dumbly obedient on the knob, started as if he had received an electric shock. The casual question needled with such an uncanny precision slick into the very core of things that he stared back at the Saint in the dim beginnings of a kind of vengeful terror.

"What do you know about Frankie?" he croaked.

"This and that," said the Saint, nonchalantly unhelpful. "Carry on shutting the door, brother, and afterwards you may keep on talking." He listened to the click of the latch, and spilled a quantity of cigarette-ash on to Mr. Elberman's priceless carpet. "It was tough on your pal being bumped off in Durban," he continued conversationally, as if he had no other object but to put his victims at their ease. "Also, in my opinion, unnecessary. I know Frankie was inclined to be cagey, but I think a clever man could have found out what ship he was sailing home on without sending a man out to South Africa to spy on him. . . . Come in, boys, come in. Sit down. Have a drink. I want you to feel happy."

"Who are you?" snarled Perrigo.

Simon shifted his mocking gaze to Elberman.

"Do you know, Louie?" he asked.

Elberman shook his head, moistening his lips mechanically.

Simon smiled, and stood up. "Sit down," he said.

He ushered the two men forcefully into chairs, relieving Perrigo of a shooting-iron during the process. And then he put his back to the fire and leaned against the mantelpiece, spinning his gun gently round one finger hooked in the trigger-guard.

"I might deceive you," he said with disarming candour, "but I won't. I am the Saint." He absorbed the reflex ripples of expression that jerked over the seated men, and smiled again. "Yes—I'm the guy you've been wanting to meet all these years. I am the man with the load of mischief. I," said the Saint, who was partial to the personal pronoun, and apt to become loquacious when he found that it could start a good sentence, "am the Holy Terror, and the only thing for you boys to do is to try and look pleased about it. I'm on the point of taking a longish holiday, and my bank balance is just a few pounds shy of the amount I'd fixed for my pension. You may not have heard anything about it before, but you are

going to make a donation to the fund."

The two men digested his speech in silence. It took them a little time, which the Saint did not begrudge them. He always enjoyed these moments. He allowed the gist of the idea to percolate deeply into their brains, timing the seconds by the regular spinning of his gun. There were six of them. Then—

"What d'you want?" snarled Perrigo.

"Diamonds," said the Saint succinctly.

"What diamonds?"

Perrigo's voice cracked on the question. The boil of belligerent animosity within him split through the thin overlay of puzzlement in which he tried to clothe his words, and tore the flimsy bluff to shreds. And the Saint's eyes danced.

"The illicit diamonds," he said, "which Frankie Hormer was bringing over by arrangement with Louie. The diamonds for which Louie double-crossed Frankie and took you into partnership, my pet. The boodle that you've got on your person right now, pretty Perrigo!"

"I don't know what you're talking about."

"No? Then perhaps Louie will explain."

Again the Saint's bantering attention transferred itself to the owner of the house, but Elberman said nothing.

And Simon shook his head sadly.

"You may be the hell of a bright conspirator, Louie," he remarked, "but you seem to be the odd man out of this conversazione. Pardon me while I do my Wild West stuff."

He unbuttoned his coat and took a length of light cord from an inside pocket. There was a running bowline ready at one end of it; he crossed to Elberman's chair and dropped the noose over his head, letting it settle down to his waist. With a brisk yank and a couple of twists he had the man's arms pinioned to his sides and the complete exhibit attached to the chair, finishing off with a pair of non-skid knots. He performed the entire operation with his left hand, and the gun in his right hand never ceased to keep the situation under effective control.

Then he returned to Perrigo.

"Where are they, sweetheart?" he inquired laconically; and the man tightened up a vicious lower lip.

"They're where you won't find them," he said.

Simon shrugged.

"The place does not exist," he said.

His glance quartered Perrigo with leisurely approbation—north to south, east to west. Somewhere in the area it covered was a hundred thousand pounds' worth of crystallised carbon, which wouldn't take up much room. A search through the man's pockets would only have taken a few seconds; but

the Saint rather liked being clever. And sometimes he had inspirations of uncanny brilliance.

"Your trousers and coat don't match," he said abruptly.

The inspiration grew larger, whizzing out of the back of beyond with the acceleration of something off Daytona Beach, and the jump that Perrigo gave kicked it slap into the immediate urgent present.

"And I'll bet Frankie Hormer's don't, either," said the Saint.

The words came out in a snap. And then he laughed. He couldn't help it. His long shot had gone welting through the bull's-eye with point-blank accuracy, and the scoring of the hit was registered on Perrigo's face as plainly as if a battery of coloured lamps had lighted up and a steam organ had begun to play *Down among the Dead Men* to celebrate the event.

"What's the joke?" demanded Perrigo harshly; and Simon pulled himself together.

"Let me reconstruct it. Diamonds are precious things—especially when they're the kind about which possession is the whole ten points of the law. If you're packing a load of that variety around with you, you don't take chances with 'em. You keep 'em as close to you as they'll go. You don't even carry them in your pockets, because pockets have their dangers. You sew them into your clothes. Frankie did, anyway. Wait a minute!" The Saint was working back like lightning over the ground he knew. He grabbed another thread and hauled it out of the skein—and it matched. "Why didn't you cut the diamonds out of Frankie's clothes? If you had time to trade clothes, you had time to do that. Then it must have been because it was dangerous. Why so? Because Frankie was dead! Because you didn't want to leave a clue to your motive. You killed Frankie, and—— Hold the line, Perrigo!" The gangster was coming out of his chair, but Simon's gun checked him half-way. "You killed Frankie," said the Saint, "and you changed your coat for his."

Perrigo relaxed slowly.

"I don't know what you're talking about," he said.

"You do. You're three minutes late with your bluff. The train has pulled out and left you in the gentleman's cloakroom. Where you have no right to be. Take off that coat!"

Perrigo hesitated for a moment; and then, sullenly, he obeyed.

He threw the garment down at the Saint's feet, and Simon dropped on one knee. With the flat of his hand he went padding over every inch of the coat, feeling for the patch of tell-tale hardness that would indicate the whereabouts of Frankie Hormer's half-million-dollar cargo.

That was the sort of happy harvest that it was an unadulterated pleasure for the Saint to reap—the

kind in which you just winked at the ears, and they hopped down off their stalks and marched in an orderly fashion into the barn. It made him feel at peace with the world. . . . Down the sleeves he went, with tingling fingers, and over the lapels. . . . Almost like lifting shoe-laces out of a blind beggar's tray, it was. . . . He went along the bottom of the coat and up the back. He turned the pockets inside out, and investigated a wallet which he found in one of them.

And then, with a power-driven vacuum pump starting work on his interior, he turned the coat over and began again.

He couldn't have been mistaken. He'd been as sure of his deductions as any man can be. The aptness of them had been placarded all over the place. And never in his life before had one of those moments of inspiration led him astray. He had grown to accept the conclusions they drew and the procedures they dictated as things no less inevitable and infallible than the laws of Nature that make water run downhill and mountains sit about the world with their fat ends undermost. And now, with a direct controversion of his faith right under his groping hands, he felt as if he was seeing Niagara Falls squirting upwards into Lake Ontario, while the Peak of Teneriffe perambulated about on its head with its splayed roots waving among the clouds.

For the first search had yielded nothing at all.

And the second search produced no more.

"Is—that—really—so!" drawled the Saint.

He stared at Perrigo without goodwill, and read the sneer in the other's eyes. It touched the rawest part of the Saint's most personal vanity—but he didn't tell the world.

"Thinking again?" Perrigo gibed.

"Why, yes," said the Saint mildly. "I often do it."

He stood up unconcernedly, fishing for his cigarette-case, and lighted another cigarette, still allowing nothing to distract the relentless aim of his automatic.

Somewhere there was a leak in the pipe, and his brain was humming out to locate it.

From Elberman there was nothing to be learned—he sat placidly where the Saint had roped him, outwardly unperturbed by what was happening, apparently satisfied to leave what small chance there was of effective opposition in the hands of Perrigo. And Elberman probably knew no more than the Saint, anyhow.

No—the secret was locked up behind the narrowed glinting eyes of Perrigo. Somewhere in the mind of that tough baby was stored the sole living human knowledge of the fate of the biggest packet of illicit diamonds ever brought into England in one batch; and Simon Templar was going to extract that

knowledge if he had to carve it out with dynamite and rock-drills.

III

"I HEARD you were clever." Perrigo spoke again, rasping into the breach in a voice that was jagged with spiteful triumph. "Got a reputation, haven't you? I'll say you must have earned it."

"Sure I did," assented the Saint, with a gaze like twin pin-points of blue fire.

And then a thunder of knocking on the front door drummed up through the house and froze the three of them into an instant's bewildered immobility.

It was, if the Saint had but known it at that moment, the herald of an interruption that was destined to turn that exceedingly simple adventure into the most riotous procession that the chronicler has yet been called upon to record. It was the starting-gun for the wildest of all wild-goose chases. It was, in its essence, the beginning of the Melancholy Journey of Mr. Teal. If the Saint had known it, he would have chalked up the exact time on the wall and drawn a halo round it. But he did not know.

He stiffened up like a pointer, with his head cocked on one side and two short vertical lines etching in between his eyebrows. The clamorous insistence of that knocking boded no welcome visitor. There was nothing furtive or sympathetic about it—nothing that one could associate with any possible client of a receiver of stolen goods. It hammered up the stairway in an atmosphere of case-hardened determination. And then it stopped, and grimly awaited results.

Simon looked from Elberman to Perrigo, and back again. He intercepted the glances that passed between them, and gathered from them a joint nescience equal to his own. In Perrigo's eyes there was suspicion and interrogation, in Elberman's nothing but an answering blank.

"Throwing a party?" murmured the Saint.

In silence he inhaled from his cigarette, and flicked it backwards into the fire. Listening intently, he heard through the window on his left the single sharp pip of a motor-horn sounding on a peculiar note. And the knocking below started again.

There was no doubt about its intentions this time. It signified its uncompromising determination to be noticed, and added a rider to the effect that if it wasn't noticed damned quickly it was perfectly prepared to bust down the door and march in regardless.

"So you've brought the cops, have you?" grated Perrigo.

He came recklessly out of his chair.

The obvious solution had dawned upon him a second after it dawned upon the Saint, and he acted ac-

cordingly. His interpretation was all wrong, but his reasoning process was simple.

To the Saint, however, the situation remained the same, whatever Perrigo thought. With the police outside, his gun was temporarily as useless as a piece of scrap-iron. And besides, he wanted further converse with Perrigo. Those three hundred carats of compact mazuma were still somewhere in Perrigo's charge, and Simon Templar was not going home without them. Therefore the bluff was called. Perrigo had got to stay alive, æsthetically distressing as his continued existence might be.

Simon pocketed his gun and stood foursquare to the fact. He slipped his head under Perrigo's smashing fist, and lammed into the gangster's solar plexus a half-arm jolt that sogged home like a battering-ram punching into a lump of putty. Perrigo gasped and went down writhing, and the Saint grinned.

"Sing to him, Louie," he instructed hopefully, and went briskly out on to the landing.

That toot on the horn outside the window had been Patricia's signal to say that something troublesome was looming up and that she was wide awake; but the first item of information was becoming increasingly self-evident. As Simon went down the stairs, the clattering on the front door broke out again, reinforced by impatient peals on the bell, and the door itself was shaking before an onslaught of ponderous shoulders as the Saint turned out the light and drew the bolts.

A small avalanche of men launched themselves at him out of the gloom. Simon hacked one of them on the shins and secured a crippling grip on the nose of another; and then someone found the switch and put the light on again, and the Saint looked along his arm and found that his fingers were firmly clamped on the proboscis of Chief Inspector Teal himself.

"Why, it's Claud Eustace!" cried the Saint, without moving.

Teal shook the hand savagely off his nose, and wiped his streaming eyes.

"What the hell are you doing here?" he brayed.

"Playing dingbat through the daisies," said the Saint.

All the debonair gay impudence that he possessed was glimmering around his presence like a sort of invisible aurora borealis, and the perception of it made something seethe up through the detective like a gush of boiling lava. His brows knitted down over a glare of actual malevolence.

"Yes? And where's Perrigo?"

"He's upstairs."

"Since when?"

"About half an hour."

"And when did you arrive?"

"Roughly simultaneous, I should say."

"What for?"

"Well, if you must know," said

the Saint, "I heard a rumour that Perrigo had discovered the second rhyme to 'Putney', which I wanted for a limerick I was trying to compose. I thought of an old retired colonel of Putney, who lived on dill pickles and chutney, till one day he tried chilis boiled with carbide, tiddy dum tiddy dum diddy utney. It's all very difficult."

Teal unfastened his coat and signed to one of the men who were with him.

"Take him," he ordered curtly.

Simon put his hands in his pockets and leaned against the wall with an air of injury.

"In your own words—what for?" he inquired; and a little of Chief Inspector Teal's old pose of heavy sleepiness returned. It was an affectation on which the detective had lately been losing a lot of his grip.

"A man named Hormer, a diamond smuggler, was murdered on the train between Southampton and Waterloo this evening. Perrigo was seen at Waterloo. I want him on suspicion of having committed the murder, and I'm going to take you on suspicion of being an accessory."

"Sorry," said the Saint; and something about the way he said it made Teal's baby blue eyes go dark and beady.

"Going to tell me you've got another alibi?"

"I am."

"I'll hear about that later."

"You'll hear about it now." The arrogant forefinger which Teal had learned to hate as personally as if it had a separate individual existence prodded into the gibbosity of his waistline with unequivocal emphasis. "From seven o'clock till eight-fifteen I was having dinner at Dorchester House—which includes the time that train got in. I had two friends with me. I talked to the head waiter, I discussed vintages with the wine waiter, and I gave the *maître d'hôtel* a personal lesson in the art of making perfect *crêpes suzette*. Go and ask 'em. And ask your own flat-footed oaf outside my house what time he saw me come in."

Teal champed grimly on his gum.

"I didn't accuse you of committing the murder," he said. "I'm having you for an accessory, and you can prove you were in Nova Scotia at the time for all that'll help you. Tell me you're going to prove you're in Nova Scotia right now, and perhaps I'll listen."

The Saint's brain functioned at racing speed.

A neat handful of spiky little facts prickled into its machinery, graded themselves and were dealt with. One—that Perrigo had still got the diamonds. Two—that the diamonds must be detached from Perrigo. Three—that the detaching must not be done by Claud Eustace Teal. Four—that the Saint must therefore remain a free agent. Five—that the Saint would not remain a

free agent if Claud Eustace Teal could help it.

Item five was fairly crackling about in the subtler undertones of the detective's drowsy voice, and it was that item which finally administered the upward heave to the balloon. The Teal-Templar feud was blowing up to bursting-point, and nobody knew it better than the Saint. But he also knew something else, which was that the burst was going to spray out into the maddest and merriest rodeo that ever was. Simon Templar proposed personally to supervise the spray.

He slipped his hands out of his pockets, and a very Saintly smile touched his lips.

"I might even prove something like that," he said.

And then he pushed Teal backwards and went away in one wild leap.

He had reached the foot of the stairs before the detectives had fully grasped what was happening, and he took the steps in flights of four at a pace that no detective in England could have approached. He made the upper landing before they were properly started. There was a big oak chest on that landing—Simon had noticed it on his way down—and he hulked it off the wall and ran it to the top of the stairs.

"Watch your toes, boys," he sang out, and shoved.

The three men below looked up and saw the chest hurtling down upon them. Having no time to get from under, they braced themselves and took the shock. And there they stuck, half-way up and half-way down. The huge iron-bound coffer tobogganed massively into them, two hundredweight of it if there was an ounce, and jammed them in their tracks. They couldn't go round, they couldn't go over, and it was several seconds before some incandescent intellect conceived the idea of going back.

Which was some time after the Saint had renewed his hectic acquaintance with Gunner Perrigo.

He found the gangster on his feet by a side table, cramming some papers into a shabby wallet. Perrigo's face was still contorted with agony, but he turned and crouched for a fight as the Saint burst in. As a matter of fact, the Saint was the last person he had ever expected to see again that night, and his puzzled amazement combined with the gesture of the Saint's upraised hand to check him where he was.

"Hold everything, Beautiful," said the Saint. "The police are in, and you and I are pulling our freight together."

He locked the door and strode coolly past the dumbfounded hoodlum. Flinging the window wide, he looked down into the private gardens that adjoined Gloucester Terrace and the park beyond. He saw shadows that moved, and knew that the house was surrounded. Simon waved a cheery hand to the cordon

and closed the window again.

He turned back to Perrigo.

"Is there a way over the roof, or a back staircase?" he asked.

The man looked at him, his underlip jutting.

"What's the idea, Templar?"

"The idea is to get to hell out of here," said the Saint crisply. "Tell me what you know—and tell it quick!"

Perrigo glowered at him uncertainly, and in the silence they heard Teal's invading contingent arriving profanely on the landing.

And Perrigo made up his mind.

"There's no way out," he said.

He spoke the truth as far as he knew it; but the Saint laughed.

"Then we'll go out that way."

The door-handle rattled, and the woodwork creaked under an impacting weight; and Elberman suddenly roused out of his long retirement.

"And vot happens to me?" he squeaked, with his labouriously cultivated accent scattering to the four winds. "Vot do I say ven dey com' in?"

Simon walked to the mantelpiece and picked up a large globular vase, from which he removed the artificial flowers.

"You stay here and sing," he said, and forced the pot down firmly over the receiver's ears.

Outside, Chief Inspector Teal settled his hat and stepped back a pace. The casket that had delayed him was at the bottom of the stairs then, but if Teal could have had his way it would have been at the bottom of the nethermost basement in Gehenna.

"All together," he snapped.

Three brawny shoulders moved as one, and the door splintered inwards.

Except for Louie Elberman, struggling like a maniac to shake the porcelain cowl off his head, the room was empty of humanity.

Teal's glance scorched round it. There was plenty of furniture, but not a thing that would have given cover to a full-grown man. Then he saw a communicating door in another wall, and swore.

He dashed through, leaving his men to deal with the easy prisoner. Curtains flapping before an open window caught his eye, and instinctively he went over and stuck his head out. A man standing by a bush below looked up.

"Seen anyone?" Teal shouted.

"No, sir."

Teal withdrew his head and noticed a second door standing ajar. He went through it and found himself back on the landing he had just left, and his language became lurid.

Simon Templar and Perrigo stopped for a moment in the hall. Perrigo was a tough guy from the Uskides upwards, but Simon felt personally responsible for his safety and he took the responsibility seriously. There were irrefutable financial reasons for his solicitude—one hundred thousand of them. And for

the duration of the fast-travelling episode he had got Perrigo's confidence. He tapped the gangster's bosom impressively.

"In case we should get separated, 7, Upper Berkeley Mews is the address," he stated. "See you remember it."

Perrigo gloomed sidelong at him, still fuddled with suspicious perplexity.

"I don't want to see you again," he growled.

"You will," said the Saint, and pushed him onwards.

Chief Inspector Teal floundered to the top of the stairs, and two of his men pressed close behind him. They looked down and saw Simon Templar alone in the hall, hands on hips, with his back to the door and an angelic smile on his upturned face.

"About that rhyme," said the Saint. "I've just thought of something. Suppose the old colonel 'went up in smoke for his gluttony'? Would the Poet Laureate pass it? Would Wilhelmina Stitch approve?"

"Get him!" snapped Teal.

The detectives swept down in a bunch.

They saw the Saint open the door, and heard outside the sharp pipping of a motor-horn. Patricia Holm was cruising round. But this they did not know. The door slammed shut again, and as a kind of multiple echo to the slam came the splattering cackle of an automatic. It fired four times, and then Teal got the door open.

He faced a considerable volume of pitchy darkness, out of which spoke the voice of one of the men he had posted to guard the courtyard.

"I'm sorry, sir—they got away."

"What happened?"

"Shot out the lights and slipped us in the dark, sir." Way down the road, a horn tooted seven times, derisively.

IV

A TINGE of old beetroot suffused Mr. Teal's rubicund complexion.

To say that his goat was completely and omnipotently got conveys nothing at all. In the last ten minutes his goat had been utterly annihilated, and the remains spirited away to the exact point in space where (so Einstein says) eternity changes its socks and starts back on the return journey. He was as comprehensively de-goated as a man can be.

With a foaming cauldron of fury bubbling just below his collar, he stood and watched his two outposts come up the steps towards him.

"Did you see Perrigo?" he rasped.

"Yes, sir. He came out first, and waited. I didn't recognise him at once—thought it was one of our own men. Then another bloke came out——"

Teal turned on the men behind him.

"And what are you loafing about here for?" he stormed. "D'you want your nannies to hold your hands when you go out at night? Get after them!"

He left the pursuit in their hands, and fumed back up the stairs. There he found a bedraggled Louie Elberman, released at last from his eccentric headgear, in charge of a plain-clothes constable. The receiver was as loquacious as Teal allowed him to be.

"You can't hold me for nothing, Mr. Teal. Those men attacked me and tied me up. You saw how I was fixed when you came in."

"I know all about you," said Teal unpleasantly.

Elberman blinked rapidly.

"Now you listen and I tell you somethings, Mr. Teal. I don't like Perrigo. He's stole some tickets and never pay me for them, nor nothing else vot he owes me. You catch him and I'll tell you all about him. I'm an innocent man vot's been robbed. Now I'll tell you."

"You can tell the magistrate in the morning," said Teal.

He was in no mood to listen patiently to anyone. His temper had been jagged over with a cross-cut saw. Simon Templer had tweaked his nose for the umpteenth time, literally and figuratively; and the realisation of it was making Teal's palms sweat. It mattered nothing that a warrant to arrest the Saint could be obtained for the trouble of asking for it, and that the Saint could probably be located in fifteen minutes by the elementary process of going to No. 7, Upper Berkeley Mews and ringing the bell. Time after time Teal had thought his task was just as easy, and time after time he had found a flourishing colony of bluebottles using his ointment for a breeding-ground. It had gone on until Teal was past feeling the faintest tremor of optimism over anything less than a capture of the Saint red-handed, with stereoscopic cameras trained on the scene and a board of bishops standing by for witnesses. And something dimly approaching that ideal had offered itself that night—only to slither through his fingers and flip him in the eye with its departing tail.

He had no real enthusiasm for the arrest of Elberman, and even his interest in Perrigo had waned. The Saint filled his horizon to the exclusion of everything else. With a morose detachment he watched Elberman removed in a taxi, and stayed on in the same spirit to receive the reports of the men who had been down the road. These were not helpful.

"We went as far as Euston Road in the squad car, sir, but it wasn't any use. They had too long a start."

Teal had expected no better. He gave his subordinates one crowded minute of the caustic edge of his tongue for not having got on the job more promptly, and was mad with himself for doing it. Then he dismissed them.

"And give my love to your Divisional Inspector," he said. "Tell him I like his officers. And when I want some dumbbell exercise, I'll send for you again."

He made his exit on that line, and was sourly aware that their surprised and reproachful glances followed him out of the house.

He realised that the Saint had got under his skin more deeply than he knew. Never in any ordinary circumstances could the stoical and even-tempered Mr. Teal have been moved to pass the buck to his helpless underlings in such a fashion.

And Teal didn't care. As he climbed into his car, the broiling crucibles of fury within him were simmering down to a steady white-hot calidity of purpose. By the time he got to grips with his man again, the Saint would probably have another peck of dust ready to throw in his eyes, some new smooth piece of hokum laid out for him to skate over. Teal was prepared for it. It made no difference to him. His whole universe at that moment comprised but one ambition—to hound Simon Templar into a corner from which there could be no escape, corral him there, and proceed to baste into him every form of discourtesy and dolour permitted by the laws of England. And he was going to do it if it took him forty years and travelled him four thousand miles.

Some of which it did—but this prophecy was hidden from him.

The most inexorably wrathful detective in the British Isles, Chief Inspector Claud Eustace Teal, stepped on the gas and walloped into the second lap of his odyssey, heading for Upper Berkeley Mews.

V

Simon Templar garaged his gat in a side pocket and leapt into the darkness. The men outside were on their toes for concerted action, but the dousing of the lights beat them. Simon swerved nimbly round the noises of their blundering, and sprinted for the square patch of twilight that indicated the way out of the courtyard.

His fingers hooked on the brickwork at the side of the opening as he reached it, and he fetched round into the road on a tight hair-pin turn that brought him up with his back to the wall outside. A yard or two to his left he saw the parking lights of a car gliding along the kerb.

Then Perrigo came plunging out. He skidded round the same turn and picked up his stride again without a pause. Simon shot off the wall and closed alongside him. He grabbed Perrigo's arm.

"The car—you won't make it on foot!"

He sprang for the running-board as he spoke—Patricia was keeping level, with the Hirondel dawdling easily along in second. Perrigo looked round hesitantly, making

the pace flat-footed. Then he also hauled himself aboard.

"Right away, lass," said the Saint.

The great car surged forward, sprawling Perrigo head over heels on to the cushions of the back seat. Patricia changed up without a click, and Simon swung himself lightly over into place beside her.

"Well?" she asked calmly; and the Saint laughed.

"Oh, we had quite a jolly little party."

"What happened?"

Simon lighted a cigarette, and inhaled with deep satisfaction.

"Claud Eustace Teal's stomach walked in, closely followed by Claud Eustace. It was most extraordinary. Subsequently, I walked out. Claud Eustace is now thinking that that was even more extraordinary."

Patricia nodded.

"I saw the men getting into the gardens, and then I drove round to the back and saw the squad car. Did you have much trouble?"

"Nothing to speak of." The Saint was slewed round in his seat, his keen eyes searching back up the road. "I pulled Teal's nose, told him a perfectly drawing-room limerick, and left him to think it over. . . . I should turn off again here, old darling—they're certain to be after us."

The girl obeyed.

And then she flashed the Saint a smile, and she said:

"Boy, I was all set to crash that squad car if they'd tried to take you away in it."

The Saint stared.

"You were which?"

"Sure, I'd have wrecked that car all right."

"And then?"

"I'd have got you out somehow."

"Pat, have you gone loco?"

She laughed, and shook her head, hustling the car recklessly down the long clear street.

Simon gazed at her thoughtfully.

It was typical of him that even then he was able to do that—and do it with his whole attention on the job. But the longer you knew him, the more amazing did that characteristic of light-hearted insouciance become. The most tempestuous incidents of his turbulent life occupied just as much of his mind as he allotted to them, and no more. And their claims were repudiated altogether by such a mood of scapegrace devilment as descended upon him at that instant.

He took in the features that he knew even better than his own with a new sense of delight. They stood out fair and clean-cut against the speeding background of sombre buildings—the small nose, the finely modelled forehead, the firm chin, the red lips slightly parted, the eyes gay and shining. The wind whipped a faint flush into her cheeks and swept back her hair like a golden mane. Under her short leather jacket the small high breasts seemed to be pressing forward with the eagerness of youth.

She turned to him, knowing his eyes were on her.

"What are you thinking, lad?"

"I'm thinking that I shall always want to remember you as I'm seeing you now," said the Saint.

One of the small strong hands came off the wheel and rested on his knee. He covered it with his own.

"I'm glad I was never a gentleman," he said.

They raced on, carving a wide circle out of the map of London. Traffic crossings delayed them here and there, but they kept as much as possible to unfrequented side streets, and moved fast. Perrigo sat in the back and brooded, with his coat collar turned up over his ears. His cosmos was still in a dizzy whirl, which he was trying to reduce to some sort of coherence. The vicissitudes that had somersaulted upon him from all angles during the past forty-five minutes had hopelessly dislocated his bearings. One minute the Saint was thumping him in the stomach, the next minute he was helping him on with his hat. One minute the Saint was preparing to hoist him, the next minute he was yanking him out of a splice. One minute the Saint seemed to have a direct hook-up with the police, the next minute he was leading the duck-out with all the zeal of an honest citizen avoiding contact with a Member of Parliament. It was a bit too much for Gunner Perrigo, a simple soul for whom the solution of all reasonable problems lay in the breech of a Smith-Wesson.

But out of the chaos one imperishable thought emerged to the forefront of his consciousness, and it was that which motivated his eventual decision. One bifurcated fact stood indefeasible amid the maelstrom. The Saint knew too much, and the Saint had at one time announced his intention of hijacking a certain parcel of diamonds. And the two prongs of that fact linked up and pointed to a single certainty: that the safest course for Gunner Perrigo was to get the hell out of any place where the Saint might be—and to make the voyage alone.

The car was held up at an Oxford Street crossing, and the Saint's back was towards him. Perrigo thought he had it all his own way.

But he had reckoned without the driving-mirror. For several minutes past the Saint had been doing a lot of Perrigo's thinking for him, and the imminence of some such manœuvre as that had been keeping him on the tip-toe of alertness. Throughout that time the driving-mirror had never been out of the tail of his eye, and he spotted Perrigo's stealthy movement almost before it had begun.

He turned his head and smiled sweetly.

"No," he said.

Perrigo squinted at him, sinking back a trifle.

"I can look after myself now," he grunted.

"You can't," said the Saint.

He was turning round again when Perrigo set his teeth, jumped up, and wrenched at the handle of the door.

It flew open; and then the Saint put one foot on the front seat and went over into the tonneau in a flying tackle.

He took Perrigo with him. They pelted over into the back seat in a lashing welter of legs and arms, fighting like savages. Perrigo had the weight, and brute strength, but Simon had the speed and cunning. The car lurched forward again while they rolled over and over in a flailing thudding tangle. After a few seconds of it, the Saint got an arm loose and whipped in a couple of pile-driving rib-binders; the effects of them put him on top of the mess, and he wedged Perrigo vigorously into a corner and held him there with a knee in his chest.

Then he looked up at the familiar helmet of a police constable, and found that the car had stopped.

They were in one of the narrow streets in the triangle of which Regent and Oxford two sides. A heavy truck and a brace of taxis had combined to put a temporary plug in the meagre passage, and the constable happened to be standing by. Patricia was looking round helplessly.

"Wot's this?" demanded the Law, and Simon smiled winningly.

"We are secret emissaries of the Sheik Ali ben Dova, and we have sworn to place the sacred domestic utensil of the Caliph on top of the Albert Memorial."

"Wot?"

"Well, what I mean is that my friend is rather drunk, and that's his idea."

The Law produced a notebook.

"Any'ow," he said, "you got no right to be treating 'im like that."

Perrigo's mouth opened, and Simon shifted some more weight on to his knee. Perrigo choked and went red in the face.

"Ah, but you've no idea how violent he gets when he's had a few," said the Saint. "Goes quite bats. I'm trying to get him home now before he does any damage."

"Help!" yapped Perrigo feebly.

"Gets delusions, and all that sort of thing," said the Saint. "Thinks people are trying to kidnap him and murder him and so forth. Fancies everyone he meets is a notorious criminal. Doesn't even recognise his own wife—this is his wife, officer. Leads her an awful life. I don't know why she married the fool. And yet if you met him when he was sober, you'd take him for the most respectable gentleman you ever saluted. And he is, too. Man with a big diamond business. Right now, he's worth more money than you could save out of your salary if you were in the Force another three hundred years and lived on air."

Patricia leaned over pleadingly.

"Oh, officer, it's dreadful," she cried. "Please try to understand—please help me to save a scandal! Last time, the magistrate said he'd send my husband to prison if it happened again."

"I'm not your husband!" howled Perrigo. "I'm being robbed! Officer——"

"You see," said the Saint. "Just what I told you. Three weeks ago he fired a shot-gun at the postman because he said he was trying to put a bomb in the letter-box."

The policeman looked doubtfully from him to the lovely anxious face of Patricia, and was visibly moved. And then Perrigo heaved up again.

"Don't you know who this guy is?" he blurted. "He's the Sgloog-phwf——"

This was not what Perrigo meant to say, but Simon clapped a hand over his mouth.

"Uses the most frightful language, too, when he's like this," said the Saint confidentially. "I couldn't even repeat what he called the cook when he thought she was sprinkling arsenic on the potatoes. If I had my way he'd be locked up. He's a dangerous lunatic, that's what he is——"

Suddenly the policeman's eyes glazed.

"Wot's that?" he barked.

Simon glanced round. His automatic lay in a corner of the seat, clear to view—it must have fallen out of his pocket during the scramble. It gleamed up accusingly from the glossy green-leather upholstery, and every milligram of the accusation was reflected in the constable's fixed and goggling eyes. . . .

Simon drew a deep breath.

"Oh, that's just one of the props. We've been to a rehearsal of one of these amateur dramatic shows——"

The constable's head ducked with unexpected quickness. It pressed down close to the face of Perrigo, and when it raised itself again there was a blunt certitude written all over it.

"*That* man ain't bin drinking," it pronounced.

"Deodorised gin," explained the Saint easily. "A new invention for the benefit of A.W.O.L. matrimoniates. Wonderful stuff. No longer can it be said that the wages of gin is breath."

The policeman straightened up.

"Ho, yus? Well, I think you'd better come round to the station, and let's 'ear some more about this."

The Saint shook his head.

He looked over the front of the car, and saw that the jam ahead had sorted itself out, and the road was clear. One hand touched Patricia's shoulder. And he smiled very seraphically.

"Sorry," he said. "We've got that date with the Albert Memorial."

He struck flat-handed at the policeman's shoulder, sending him staggering back; and as he did so

Patricia engaged the gears and the Hirondel rocketed off the mark again like a shell from a howitzer.

Simon and Perrigo spilled over in another wild flurry. This time the objective was the gun on the seat. Simon got it. He also got Perrigo effectively screwed down to the mat, and knelt heavily on his biceps. The cold muzzle of the automatic rammed up under Perrigo's chin.

"That will be the end of your bonehead act, brother," said the Saint tersely. "You'd better understand that the only chance you've got is with me. You're a stranger over here. If I left you on your own, Teal would have you behind bars in record time. You wouldn't last twenty-four hours. And if you'd been able to make that cop take notice of you the way you wanted, you wouldn't have lasted twenty-four minutes—he'd have lugged you off to the station with the rest of us, and that would have been your finale. Get that up under your skull. And then put this beside it: you can't make your getaway now without consulting me. I've got your passport and your ticket to New York right next my heart—dipped them out of your pocket before we left Louie's. Which is why you're going to stick as close to me as you know how. When I'm through with you, I'll give you the bum's rush quick enough—but not before!"

VI

The Hirondel skimmed round a corner and flashed out into Regent Street. The bows of an omnibus loomed up, bearing down upon them. Patricia spun the wheel coolly; they swerved round the wrong side of an island, dodged a taxi and a private car, and dived off the main road again.

Perrigo, on the floor of the tonneau, digested the fresh set of facts that the Saint had streamed into him. However apocryphal the first sheaf that he had meditated had been, these new ones were definitely concise and concrete—as was the circle of steel that bored steadily into his dewlap. He assimilated them in a momentous silence, while the stars gyrated giddily above him.

"All right," he said at length. "Let me up."

Simon hitched himself on to the seat; his gun went into his pocket, but retained command of the situation. As they entered Berkeley Square he watched Perrigo looking out to left and right, and was prompted to utter an additional warning.

"Stepping off moving vehicles," he said, "is the cause of umpteen street accidents per annum. If you left us now, it would be the cause of umpteen plus one. Ponder the equation, brother. . . . And besides," said the Saint, who was starting to feel expansive again, "we've only just begun to know each other.

The warbling and the woofling dies, so to speak, and we settle down to get acquainted. We approach the peaceful interlude.

When the cakes and ale are over
And the buns and beer run dry
And the pigs are all in clover
Up above the bright blue sky—

as the poet hath it. Do you ever write poetry?"

Perrigo said nothing.

"He does not write poetry," said the Saint.

The car stopped a few yards from the entrance of Upper Berkeley Mews, and Simon leaned forward and put his elbows on the back of the front seat. He rested his chin on his hands.

"When we were interrupted, darling," he said, "I was on the point of making some remarks about your mouth. It is, bar none, the most bewitching, alluring, tempting, maddening, seductive mouth I've ever kiss — set eyes on. The idea that it should ever be used for eating kippers is sacrilegious. You will oblige me by eating no more kippers. The way your lips curl at the corners when you're not sure whether you'll smile or not——"

Patricia turned with demure eyes.

"What do we do now?" she asked; and the Saint sighed.

"Teal's bloodhound saw you go out?"

"Yes."

"Then he'd better see you go in again. It'll set his mind at rest. Bertie and I will go our ways."

He opened the door and stepped out, Perrigo followed, constrained to do so by a grip which the Saint had fastened on the scruff of his neck. Maintaining possession of Perrigo, Simon leaned on the side of the car.

"When we get a minute or two to ourselves, Pat," he said, "remind me that my discourse on your eyes, which occupies about two hundred and fifty well-chosen words——"

"Is to be continued in our next," said Patricia happily, and let in the clutch.

Simon stood for a moment where she had left him, watching the car swing round into the mews.

And he was realising that the warbling and the woofling were very near their end. His flippant parody had struck home into the truth.

It was a queer moment for that blithe young cavalier of fortune. Out of the clear sky of the completely commonplace, it had flashed down upon him with a blinding brightness. The lights pointed to the end. No tremendous battle had done it, no breathless race for life, no cataclysmic instant of vision when all the intangible battlements of Paradise were shown up under the shadow of the sword. Fate, in the cussedness of its own inscrutable designs, had ordained that the revelation should be otherwise. Some-

thing simple and startling, a thing seen so often and grown so tranquilly familiar that the sudden unmasking of its inner portent would sweep away all the foundations of his disbelief like a tidal wave; something that would sheer ruthlessly through all sophistries and lies. A girl's profile against the streaking backcloth of smoke-stained stone. Yellow lamp-light rippling on a flying mane of golden hair. *Commedia.*

On the night of the 3rd of April, at 10.30 p.m., Simon Templar stood on the pavement of Berkeley Square and looked life squarely in the eyes.

Just for that moment. And then the Hirondel was gone, and the moment was past. But all that there was to be done was done. The High Gods had spoken.

Simon turned. There was a new light in his eyes.

"Let's go," he said.

They went. His step was light and swift, and the blood laughed in his veins. He had drunk the magic wine of the High Gods at one draught, down to the last dregs. It is a brave man who can do that, and he has his reward.

Perrigo walked tamely by his side. Simon had less than no idea what was passing in the gangster's mind just then. And he cared less than nothing. He would have taken on a hundred Perrigos that night, one after another or in two squads of fifty, just as they pleased—blipped them, bounced them, boned them, rolled them, trussed them up, wrapped them in greaseproof paper, and laid them out in a row to be called for by the corporation scavengers. And if Perrigo didn't believe it, Perrigo had only got to start something and see what happened. Simon thought less of Perrigo than a resolute rhinoceros would think of a small worm.

He ran up the steps of 104, Berkeley Square, turned his key in the lock, and switched on the lights. He made way for Perrigo with a courtly gesture.

"In," he said.

Perrigo walked in very slowly. Some fresh plan of campaign was formulating behind the gangster's sullen compliance. Simon knew it. He knew that the ice was very thin—that only the two trump cards of passport and tickets, and the superb assurance with which they had been played, had driven Perrigo so far without a third bid for freedom. And he was not interested. As Perrigo's rearward foot lifted over the threshold, Simon shoved him on, followed him in a flash, and put his back to the closed door.

"You're thinking," he murmured, "that this is where you slug me over the head with the umbrella-stand, recover your property, and fade out. You're wrong."

He pushed Perrigo backwards. It seemed quite an effortless push, but there was an unsuspected kick of strength behind it. It flung Perrigo three paces towards the stairs; and

then the hoodlum stopped on his heels and returned in a savage recoil. Simon slipped the gun out of his pocket, and Perrigo reined in.

"You daren't shoot," he blustered.

"Again you're wrong," said the Saint metallically. "It would give me great pleasure to shoot. I haven't shot anyone for months. Perhaps you're thinking I'll be scared of the noise. Once more you're wrong. This gun isn't silenced, but the first three cartridges are only half-charged. No one in the street would hear a sound." For a tense second the Saint's gaze snapped daggers across the space between them. "You still think I'm bluffing. You've half a mind to test it out. Right. This is your chance. You've only to take one step towards me. One little step. . . . I'm waiting for you!"

And Perrigo took the step.

The automatic slanted up, and hiccoughed. It made less noise than opening up a bottle of champagne, but Perrigo's hat whisked off his head and floated down to the carpet behind him. The gunman looked round stupidly at it, his face going a shade paler.

"Of course," said the Saint, relapsing into the conversational style. "I'm not a very good shot. I've been practising a bit lately, but I've a long way to go yet before I get into your class. Another time I might sort of kill you accidental like, and that would be very distressing. And then the question arises, Perrigo; would you go to Heaven? I doubt it. They're so particular about the people they let in. I don't think they'd like that check suit you're wearing. And can you play a harp? Do you know your psalms? Have you got a white nightie?"

Perrigo's fists clenched.

"What game are you playing?" he snarled.

"You know me," said the Saint rhetorically. "I am the man who knocked the L out of London, and at any moment I may become the man who knocked the P out of Perrigo. My game hasn't changed since we first met. It's a private party, and the police seemed to want to interfere, so we commuted to another site. That's the only reason why we're here, and why I took the trouble to get you away from Regent's Park. In short, if you haven't guessed it already, I'm still after those diamonds, my pet. They mean the beginning of a new chapter in my career, and a brief interlude of peace for Chief Inspector Teal. They are my old-age pension. I want that packet of boodle more than I've ever wanted any loot before; and if you imagine I'm not going to have them, your name is Mug. And now you can pass on—this hall's getting draughty."

"I'll see you in hell first," grated Perrigo.

"You won't see me in hell at all," said the Saint. "I like warm climates, but I'm very musical, and I

think the harps have it. Forward march!"

He propelled Perrigo down the hall to a door which opened on to a flight of stone steps. At the bottom of these steps there was a small square cellar furnished with a chair and a camp bed. The door, Perrigo noticed, was of three-inch oak, and a broad iron bar slid in grooves across it. Simon pointed, and Perrigo went in and sat on the bed.

"When you know me better," said the Saint, "you'll discover that I have a cellar complex. So many people have taken me into cellars in order to do me grievous bodily harm that the infection has got into my system. There's something very sinister and thrilling about a cellar, don't you think?"

Perrigo hazarded no opinion.

"How long do I stay here?" he asked.

"Until tomorrow," Simon told him. "You'll find the place rather damp and stuffy, but there's enough ventilation to save you from suffocating. If you decide to strangle yourself with your braces, you might do it under that loose flagstone in the corner, which conceals a deep grave all ready dug for any corpses I might have on my hands. And in the morning I'll be along with some breakfast and a pair of thumbscrews, and we'll have a little chat. Night-night, old dear."

He left Perrigo with those cheering thoughts to chew over, and went out, bolting the iron bar into place and securing it with a steel staple.

A silver-noted buzzer was purring somewhere above him as he ran up the stairs, and he knew that the next development was already on its way. He was not surprised—he had been expecting it—but the promptitude with which his expectations had ben realised argued a tenacious implacability on the part of Chief Inspector Teal that would have unsettled the serenity of anyone but a Simon Templar. But the Saint was lining up to the starting-gate of an odyssey quite different from that of Mr. Teal. He let himself through the linen cupboard of the first-floor bathroom into No. 1, Upper Berkeley Mews, and went quickly down the runway to No. 7; and he was smiling as he stepped out of it into his own bedroom and slid the mirror panel shut behind him.

Patricia was waiting for him there.

"Teal's on his way," she said.

"Alone?"

"He was talking to his sleuth-hound when I gave you the signal. There wasn't anyone else with him."

"Splendid."

His coat off, the Saint was over at the dressing-table, putting a lightning polish on his hair with brush and comb. Under Patricia's eyes, the traces of his recent rough-and-tumble in the car disappeared miraculously. In a matter of seconds

he was his old spruce self, lean and immaculate and alert, a laughing storm-centre of hell-for-leather mischief, flipping into a blue velvet smoking-gown. . . .

"Darling——"

She stopped him, with a hand on his arm. She was quite serious.

"Listen, boy. I've never questioned you before, but this time there's no Duke of Fortezza to frame you out."

"Maybe not."

"Are you sure there isn't going to be real trouble?"

"I'm sure there is. For one thing, our beautiful little bolthole has done its stuff. Never again will it make that sleuth-hound outside my perfect alibi. After tonight, Claud Eustace will know that I've got a spare exit, and he'll come back with a search warrant and a gang of navvies to find it. But we'll have had our money's worth out of it. Sure, there's going to be trouble. I asked for it—by special delivery!"

"And what then?"

Simon clapped his hands on her shoulders, smiling the old Saintly smile.

"Have you ever known any trouble that I couldn't get out of?" he demanded. "Have you ever seen me beaten?"

She thrilled to his madcap buoyancy—she did not know why.

"Never!" she cried.

Downstairs, the front door bell rang. The Saint took no notice. He held her with his eyes, near to laughing, vibrant with impetuous audacity, magnificently mad.

"Is there anything that can put me down?"

"I can't imagine it."

He swept her to him and kissed her red lips.

The bell rang again. Simon pointed, with one of his wide gestures.

"Down there," he said, "there's an out-size detective whose one aim in life is to spike the holiday that's coming to us. Our own Claud Eustace Teal, with his mouth full of gum and his wattles crimsoning, paying us his last professional call. Let's go and swipe him on the jaw."

VII

In the sitting-room, Patricia closed her book and looked up as Chief Inspector Teal waddled in. Simon followed the visitor. It was inevitable that he should dramatise himself—that he should extract the last molecule of diversion from the scene by playing his part as strenuously as if life and death depended on it. He was an artist. And that night the zest of his self-appointed task tingled electrically in all his fibres. Teal, chewing stolidly through a few seconds' portentous pause, thought that he had never seen the Saint so debonair and dangerous.

"I hope I don't intrude," he said at last, heavily.

"Not at all," murmured the Saint.

"You see before you a scene of domestic repose. Have some beer?"

Teal took a tight hold on himself. He knew that there was a toe-to-toe scrap in front of him, and he wasn't going to put himself at a disadvantage sooner than he could help. The searing vials of righteous indignation within him had simmered down still further during the drive from Regent's Park, and out of the travail caution had been born. His purpose hadn't weakened in the least, but he wasn't going to trip over his own feet in the attempt to achieve it. The lights of battle glittering about in the Saint's blue eyes augured a heap of snags along the route that was to be paddled, and for once Chief Inspector Teal was trying to take the hint.

"Coming quietly?" he asked.

The feeler went out, gruffly noncommittal; and Simon smiled.

"You're expecting me to ask why," he drawled, "but I refuse to do anything that's expected of me. Besides, I know."

"How do you know?"

"My spies are everywhere. Sit down, Claud. That's a collapsible chair we bought specially for you, and the cigars in that box explode when you light them. Oh, and would you mind taking off your hat?—it doesn't go with the wallpaper."

Teal removed his bowler with savage tenderness. He realised that he was going to have an uphill fight to keep the promise he had made to himself. There was the faintest thickening in his lethargic voice as he repeated his question.

"How do you know what I want you for?"

"My dear soul, how else could I have known except by being with you when you first conceived the idea of wanting me?" answered the Saint blandly.

"So you're going to admit it really was you I was talking to at Regent's Park?"

"Between ourselves—it was."

"Got some underground way out of here, haven't you?"

"The place is a rabbit-warren."

"And where's Perrigo?"

"He's playing bunny."

Teal twiddled a button, and his eyelids lowered. The leading tentacles of a nasty cold sensation were starting to weave clammily up his spine. It was something akin to the sensation experienced by a man who, in the prelude to a nightmare, has been cavorting happily about in the middle of a bridge over a fathomless abyss, and who suddenly discovers that the bridge has turned into a thin slab of toffee and the temperature is rising.

Something was springing a leak. He hadn't the ghost of a presentiment of what the leak was going to be, but the symptoms of its approach were bristling all over the situation like the quills on a porcupine.

"You helped Perrigo to escape at

Regent's Park, didn't you?" He tried to make his voice sleepier and more bored than it had ever been before, but the strain clipped minute snippets off the ends of the syllables. "You're admitting that you caused a wilful breach of the peace by discharging firearms in a public thoroughfare, and you obstructed and assaulted the police in the execution of their duty, and that you became an accessory to wilful murder?"

"Between these four walls," said the Saint, "and in these trousers, I cannot tell a lie."

"Very well." Teal's knuckles whitened over the brim of his hat. "Templar, I arrest you——"

"Oh, no," said the Saint. "Oh, no, Claud, you don't."

The detective tautened up as if he had received a blow. But Simon Templar wasn't even looking at him. He was selecting a cigarette from a box on the centre table. He flicked it into the air and caught it between his lips, with his hands complacently outspread. "My only parlour trick," he remarked, changing the subject.

Teal spoke through his teeth.

"And why?" he flared.

"Only one I ever learnt," explained the Saint naïvely.

"Why don't I arrest you?"

Simon ranged himself side-saddle on the table. He stroked the cog of an automatic lighter and put his cigarette in the flame.

"Because, Claud, what I say to you now, between these four walls and in these trousers, and what I'd say in the witness-box, are two things so totally different you'd hardly believe they came from the same rosebud mouth."

Teal snorted.

"Perjury, eh? I thought something cleverer than that was coming from you, Saint."

"You needn't be disappointed."

"Got a speech that you think'll let you out?"

"I have, Claud. I've got a peach of a speech. Put me in the dock, and I'll lie like a newspaper proprietor. Any idea what that means?"

The detective shrugged.

"That's your affair," he grunted. "If you want to be run for perjury as well as other things, I'm afraid I can't stop you."

Simon leaned forward, his left hand on his hip and his right hand on his knee. The deep-blue danger lights were glinting more brightly than ever in his eyes, and there was fight in every line of him. A back-to-the-wall, buccaneering fight, rollicking out to damn the odds.

"Claud, did you think you'd got me at last?"

"I did. And I still think so."

"Thought that the great day had dawned when my name was coming out of the Unfinished Business ledger, and you were going to sleep nights?"

"I did."

"That's too bad, Claud," said the Saint.

Teal pursed his lips tolerantly, but there were pinpoints of red luminance darting about in his gaze.

"I'm still waiting to hear why," he said flatly.

Simon stood up.

"O.K.," he said, and a new indefinable timbre of menace was pulsing into his easy drawl. "I'll tell you why. You asked for a showdown. I'll tell you what you've been thinking. There was a feather you wanted for that hat of yours: you tried all manner of ways to get it, but it wasn't having you. You were too dumb. And then you thought you'd got it. Tonight was your big night. You were going to collect the Saint on the most footling break he ever made. I've got away with everything from murder downwards under your bloodshot eyes, but you were going to run me for stealing fourpence out of the Bank of England."

"That's not what I said.

"It goes for what you meant. You get what you asked for, Claud. Thought I was the World's Wet Smack, did you? Figured that I was so busy crashing the mountains that I'd never have time to put a tab on all the molehills? Well, you asked for something. Now would you like to know what I've really been doing tonight?"

"I'll hear it."

"I've been entertaining a dozen friends, and I'll give you from now till Kingdom Come to prove it's a lie!"

The detective glared.

"D'you think I was born yesterday?" he yelped.

"I don't know," said the Saint lazily. "Maybe you weren't born at all. Maybe you were just dug up. What's that got to do with it?"

Teal choked. His restraint split into small pieces, and the winds of his wrath began to twitch the bits out of his grasp, one by one.

"What's the idea?" he demanded heatedly; and the Saint smiled.

"Only the usual alibi, old corpuscle. Like it?"

"Alibi?" Teal rent the words with sadistic violence. "Oh, yes, you've got an alibi! Six men saw you at Regent's Park alone, but you've got twelve men to give you an alibi. And where was this alibi?"

"In the house that communicates with this one by the secret passage you wot of."

"You aren't going to change your mind about that passage?"

"Why should I? It may be eccentric, but there's nothing in the Statute Book to say it's illegal."

"And that's the alibi you're going to try and put over on me?"

"It's more," said the Saint comfortably. "It's the alibi that's going to dish you."

"Is it?"

Simon dropped his cigarette into an ashtray and put his hands in his pockets. He stood in front of the detective, six feet two inches of hair-trigger disorder—with a smile.

"Claud," he said, "you're missing

the opportunity of a lifetime. I'm letting you in on the ground floor. Out of the kindness of my heart I'm presenting you with a low-down on the organisation of a master criminal that hundreds would give their ears to get. I'm not doing it without expense to myself, either. I'm giving away my labyrinth of secret passages, which means that if I want to be troublesome again I shall have to look for a new headquarters. I'm showing you the works of my emergency alibi, guaranteed to rescue anyone from any predicament: there are four lords, a knight and three officers of field rank in it—they've taken me years to collect, and now I shall have to fossick around for a new bunch. But what are trifles like that between friends? Now be sensible, Claud. It becomes increasingly evident that some one is impersonating me."

"Yes, and I know who it is!"

"But it was bound to happen, wasn't it?" said the Saint, continuing in that philosophically persuasive strain under which the razor-keen knife-edges were gliding about like hungry sharks in a smooth tropical sea. "In my misguided efforts to do good, I once made myself so notorious that someone or other was bound to think of hanging his sins on me. The wonder is that it wasn't thought of years ago. Now look at that recent affair in Hampstead——"

"I don't want to know any more about that affair in Hampstead," said Teal torridly. "I want to know how you're going to swing it on me this time. Come on. Let me have the names and addresses of these twelve liars. I'll run them for perjury at the same time as I'm running you."

"You won't. But I'll tell you what *I'll* do——"

The Saint's forefinger shot out. Teal struck it aside.

"Don't do that!" he yapped.

"I have to," said the Saint. "I love the way your tummy dents in and pops out again. Talking of tummies——"

"You tell me what you think you're going to do."

"I'll run you for bribery, corruption, and blackmail!" said the Saint.

His languid voice tightened up on the sentence with a sudden crispness that had the effect of a gunshot. It rocked the atmosphere like an exploding bomb. And it was followed by a silence that was earsplitting.

The detective gaped at him with goggling eyes, while a substratum of dull scarlet sapped up under the skin of his face. It was the most flabbergasting utterance that Chief Inspector Teal had listened to. He blinked as if he had been smitten with doubts of his own sanity.

"Have you gone off your head?" he hooted.

"Not that I know of."

"And who's supposed to have been bribing me?"

"I have."

"You?"

"Yeah." The Saint took another cigarette from the box, and lighted it composedly. "Haven't seen your pass-book lately, have you? You'd better ask for it tomorrow morning. You'll discover that in the last six weeks alone you've taken eight hundred and fifty pounds off me. Two hundred pounds on February the sixteenth, two-fifty on March the sixth, four hundred on March the twenty-second—apart from smaller regular payments extending over the previous six months. All the cheques have got your endorsement on 'em, and they've all been passed through your account: they're back in my bank now, available for inspection by any authorised person. It's quite a tidy little sum, Claud—eighteen hundred quid altogether. You'll have a grand time explaining it away."

Some of the colour ebbed slowly out of Teal's plump cheeks, and he seemed to sag inside his overcoat. Only the expression in his eyes remained the same—a stare of blank, frozen, incredulous stupefaction.

"You framed me for that?" he got out.

"I'm afraid I did." Simon inhaled, and blew a smoke-ring. "It was just another of my brilliant ideas. Are you thinking you can deny the endorsements? It won't be easy. Eight hundred and fifty pounds in six weeks is real money. I wrote it off as insurance, but I still hated parting with it. And how many juries would believe that I paid a detective eighteen hundred pounds inside six months just with the idea of being funny? It'd be a steep gamble for you if we had to go through the courts, old dear. I admit it was very naughty of me to bribe you, but there it is. . . . Unfortunately, you couldn't be content with what I gave you. You wanted more, and you tried all sorts of persecutions to get it. First that Hampstead affair, and then this show tonight. . . . Oh, well, Claud, it looks as if we shall have to swing together."

VIII

THE detective seemed to have shrunk. His complexion had gone lined and blotchy, and there was a dazed look in his eyes that stabbed the Saint with a twinge of pity.

Teal was a man facing the end. The bombshell that the Saint had flung at him had knocked the underpinning from the very foundations of his universe. The fight and bluster had gone out of him. He knew, better than anyone, the full and devastating significance of the trap that had been laid for him. There was no way out of it—no human bluff or subterfuge that would let him out. He could stick to his guns and give battle to the last ditch—arrest the Saint as he had intended, take his chance with the

threatened alibi, fight out the counter-charge of bribery and corruption when it came along, perhaps even win an acquittal—but it would still be the end of his career. Even if he won, he would be a ruined man. A police officer must be above suspicion. And those endorsed and cancelled cheques of which the Saint had spoken, produced in court, would be damning evidence. Acquitted, Teal would still be under a cloud. Ever afterwards, there would be gossips to point to him and whisper that he was a man who had broken the eleventh commandment and escaped the consequences by the skin of his teeth. And he was not so young as he had been—not so young that he could snap his fingers at the gossips and buckle grimly back into the task of making good again. He would have to resign. He would be through.

He stood there, going paler, but not flinching; and the Saint blew two more smoke-rings.

Teal was trying to think, but he couldn't. The suddenness with which the blow had fallen had pulverized his wits. He felt himself going mentally and physically numb. Under the surveillance of those devilishly bleak blue eyes, and in the vivid presence of what they stood for, he couldn't do any consecutive and sober thinking.

Abruptly, he settled his belt and shook down his coat.

"I'll see you in the morning," he said, in a sort of gulp, and walked jerkily out of the room.

Simon heard the front door close, and listened to the detective's footsteps clumping past the window and dying away towards Berkeley Square. Something seemed to have paralysed their ordinary ponderous self-reliance. There was the least little tell-tale drag in them. . . . And the Saint turned, and found Patricia watching him.

"A notable triumph," he said quietly.

The girl stood up.

"Were you bluffing?" she asked.

"Of course not. I knew that Teal and I were certain to have that showdown sooner or later, and I was prepared for it. I'd got half a dozen more shocks waiting for him, if he'd stayed to hear them. I just wanted to put the wind up him. But I'd no idea it'd be such a smash."

Patricia looked away.

"It was pathetic," she said. "Oh, I could see him go ten years older while you were talking."

Simon nodded. The fruits of victory were strangely bitter.

"Pat, did you know that an hour or so ago I was planning for this to be the sorriest show Teal ever stuck his nose into? The noble game of Teal-baiting was going to be played as it had never been played before. That's all I've got to say. . . . What a damn-fool racket it is!"

He turned on his heel, and left her without another word.

His mind was too full to talk. Upstairs, he threw off his clothes and tumbled into bed, and almost instantly he fell asleep. That gift of sleep is one that all great adventurers have shared—a sleep that heals the mind and solves all problems. Patricia, coming up later, found his face as peaceful as a child's.

He must have slept very soundly, for the sound of a stealthy rustle only half roused him. Then he heard a click, and he was wide awake.

He opened his eyes and glanced round the room. There was enough light for him to see that there was no unusual shadow anywhere. He looked at his watch, and saw that it was nearly seven o'clock in the morning. For some moments he lay still, gazing at the indicator panel on the opposite wall. An ingenious system of invisible alarms connected up with that panel from every part of the house, and it was impossible for anyone to move about inside No. 7, Upper Berkeley Mews at night without every yard of his progress being charted by winking little coloured bulbs on the panel. But not one bulb was flickering, and the auxiliary buzzer under the Saint's pillow was silent.

Simon frowned puzzledly, wondering if his imagination had deceived him. And then a breathtaking duet of inspiration whirled into his brain, and he wriggled noiselessly from between the sheets.

He pushed the pier-glass aside, and touched a switch that illuminated the secret passage. Right at his feet, he saw a charred match-end lying on the felt matting, and his lips tightened. He sped down the corridor, and entered the end house. In front of him, the door of a cupboard, and its false back communicating with the bathroom in 104, Berkeley Square, were both wide open; and he remembered that he had left them ajar behind him on the previous night, in his haste to get home and resume the feud with Chief Inspector Teal. The bathroom door was also ajar; he slipped through it, and emerged on the landing. A tiny glow of light farther down the stairs caught his eye, and vanished immediately.

Then he established a second link between the two parts of the duet that had brought him to where he was and wished he had delayed the chase while he picked up his gun. He crept downwards, and saw a shadow that moved.

"Stay where you are," he rapped. "I've got you covered!"

The shadow leapt away, and Simon hurled himself after it. He was still four steps behind when he sprang through the air and landed on the man's shoulders. They crashed down together, rolled down the remaining treads, and reached the bottom with a bump. The Saint groped for a strangle-hold. He had found it with one hand when he saw a dull gleam of steel in the

light of a street lamp that flung a faint nimbus of rays through the transom above the front door. He squirmed aside, and the point ripped his pyjamas and thudded into the floor. Then a bony knee kicked up into his stomach, and he gasped and went limp with agony. The front door banged while he lay there twisting helplessly.

It was ten minutes before he was able to stagger to his feet and go on a tour of investigation. Down in the basement, he found the cellar door wide open. A hole big enough for a man's arm to pass through had been carved out of it a foot above the massive bolt, and the flagstones were littered with chips of wood. Simon realised that he had been incredibly careless.

He returned to his bedroom and looked at the coat he had been wearing. It had been moved from where he had thrown it down—that had been the cause of the soft rustling that had first disturbed his slumbers. A further investigation showed that Perrigo's passport and tickets were missing from the pocket where Simon had left them. This was no worse than the Saint had expected.

Aching, he went back to bed and slept again. And this time he dreamed a dream.

He was running up the wrong side of a narrow moving stairway. Patricia was in front of him, and he couldn't go fast enough; he had to keep pushing her. He wanted to get past her and catch Perrigo, who was dancing about just out of his grasp. Perrigo was dressed something like an organ-grinder's monkey, in a ridiculous straw hat, a tail coat, and a pair of white flannel trousers. There was an enormous diamond necklace over his collar; and he jeered and grimaced, and bawled: "Not in these trousers." Then the scene changed, and Teal came riding by on a giraffe, wearing a pair of plus fours; and he also said: "Not in these trousers."

Then the Saint woke up, and saw that it was half-past eight. He jumped out of bed, lighted a cigarette, and made for the bathroom. He soaped his face and shaved, haunted by his dream for some reason that he could not nail down; and he was wallowing in bath salts when the interpretation of it flashed upon him with an aptness that made him erupt out of the water with an almighty splash.

Ten minutes later, gorgeously apparalled in his new spring suit, he tore down the stairs and found bacon and eggs on the table and Patricia reading a newspaper.

"Perrigo has left us," he said.

The girl looked up with startled eyes, but Simon was laughing.

"He's left us, but I know where he's gone," said the Saint. "He collected his papers before he went. I forgot that he carried a knife, and locked him up without fanning him—he spent the night digging his way through the door, and

came through here for his passport in the early morning. I was just too slow to catch him. We'll meet him again on the boat train—it leaves at ten o'clock."

"How do you know he'll be on it?"

"If he didn't mean to do that, why did he come back for his ticket? No—I know exactly what's in his head. He knows that he's only got one way out, now that he's bereaved of Louie, and he's going to try to make the grade. He's made up his mind that I'm not helping the police, and he's going to take his chance on a straight duck with me—and I'll bet he'll park himself in the most crowded compartment he can find, just to give himself the turn of the odds. And I'll say some more; I know where those diamonds are now!"

"Have you got them?"

"Not yet. But up at Louie's I spotted that Perrigo's costume was assorted. I thought he'd changed coats with Frankie Hormer, and I went over his jacket twice before Teal buzzed in. Naturally, I didn't find anything. I must have been half-witted. It wasn't coats he'd swapped—it was trousers. Those diamonds are sewn up somewhere in Bertie's leg draperies!"

Patricia came over to the table.

"Have you thought any more about Teal?" she asked.

Simon strode across to a bookcase and took down a small leather-bound volume. There were months of painstaking work in its unassuming compass—names, addresses, personal data, means of approach, sources of evidence, all the laboriously perfected groundwork that enabled the Saint's raids upon the underworld to be carried through so smoothly and made their meteoric audacity possible.

"Pat," said the Saint, "I'm going to make Teal a great man. It may be extravagant, but what the hell? Can you have the whole earth for ten cents? This party has already cost us our home, our prize alibi, and one of our shrewdest counter-attacks—but who cares? Let's finish the thing in style. I'm the cleverest man in the world. Can't I find six more homes, work out fourteen bigger and better alibis, and invent seventy-nine more stratagems and spoils? Can't I fill two more books like this if I want to?"

Patricia put her arms round his neck.

"Are you going to give Teal that book?"

The Saint nodded. He was radiant.

"I'm going to steal Perrigo's pants, Claud Eustace is going to smile again, and you and I are going away together."

IX

The Saint was in a theatrical mood. He performed a minor sorcery on a Pullman attendant

that materialised seats where none had been before, and ensconced himself with the air of a wizard taking his ease. After a couple of meditative cigarettes, he produced a pencil and commenced a metrical composition in the margins of the wine list.

He was still scribbling with unalloyed enthusiasm when Patricia got up and went for a walk down the train. She was away for several minutes; and when she returned, the Saint looked up and deliberately disregarded the confusion in her eyes.

"Give ear," he said. "This is the Ballad of the Bold Bad Man, another Precautionary Tale:

Daniel Dinwiddie Gigsworth-Glue
Was warranted by those who knew
To be a perfect paragon
With or without his trousers on;
An upright man (the Gigsworths are
Peerlessly perpendicular)
Staunch to the old morality,
Who would have rather died than be
Observed at Slumpton-under-Slop
In bathing drawers without the top."

"Simon," said the girl, "Perrigo isn't on the train."

The Saint put down his pencil.

"He is, old darling. I saw him when we boarded it at Waterloo, and I think he saw me."

"But I've looked in every carriage——"

"Did you take everyone's fingerprints?"

"A man like Perrigo wouldn't find it easy to disguise himself."

Simon smiled.

"Disguises are tricky things," he said. "It isn't the false whiskers and the putty nose that get you down—it's the little details. Did I ever tell you about a friend of mine who thought he'd get the inside dope about Chelsea? He bought a pink shirt and a velvet coat, grew a large semicircular beard, rented a studio, and changed his name to Prmnlovcwz; and he had a great time until one day they caught him in an artist's colourman's trying to buy a tube of Golder's Green. . . . Now you must hear some more about Daniel:

How lovely, oh, how luminous
His spotless virtue seemed to us
Who sat among the cherubim
Reserving Daniel's pew for him!
Impossible to indispose,
His honour, shining like his nose,
Blazed through an age of sin and strife
The beacon of a blameless life. . . .
And then he fell. . . .

The Tempter, who
Was mortified by Daniel Glue,
Played his last evil card; and
Dan
Who like a perfect gentleman,
Had scorned strong drink and
wicked oaths
And blondes with pink silk
underclothes,
Bought (Oh, we saw the angels
weep!)
A ticket in the Irish Sweep."

Patricia reached across the table and captured the Saint's hands.

"Simon, I won't be out of it! Where *is* Perrigo?"

"If you talk much louder, he'll hear you."

"He isn't in this coach!"

"He's in the next one."

The girl stared.

"What does he look like?"

Simon smiled, lighting a cigarette.

"He's chosen the simplest and nearly the most effective disguise there is. He's got himself up as a very fair imitation of our old pal the negro Spiritual." The Saint looked at her with merry eyes. "He's done it well, too; but I spotted him at once. Hence my parable. Did you ever see a negro with light yellow eyes? They may exist, but I've never met one. There used to be a blue-eyed Sikh in Hong Kong who became quite famous, but that's the only similar freak I've met. So when I got a glimpse of those eyes I took another peek at the face—and Perrigo it was. Remember him now?"

Patricia nodded breathlessly.

"Why couldn't I see it?" she exclaimed.

"You've got to have a brain for that sort of thing," said the Saint modestly.

"But—yes, I remember now—the carriage he's in is full——"

"And you're wondering how I'm going to get his trousers off him? Well, the problem certainly has its interesting angles. How does one steal a man's trousers on a crowded train? You mayn't believe it, but I see difficulties about that myself."

An official came down the train, checking up visas and issuing embarkation vouchers. Simon obtained a couple of passes, and smoked thoughtfully for some minutes. And then he laughed and stood up.

"Why worry?" he wanted to know. "I've thought of a much better thing to do. One of my really wonderful inspirations."

"What's that?"

Simon tapped her on the shoulder.

"I'm going to beguile the time by baiting Bertie," he said, with immense solemnity. "C'mon!"

He hurtled off in his volcanic way, with a long-striding swing of impetuous limbs, as if a gale of wind swept him on.

And Patricia Holm was smiling as she ran to catch him up—the unfathomable and infinitely tender smile of all the women who have

been doomed to love romantic men. For she knew the Saint better than he knew himself. He could not grow old. Oh, yes, he would grow in years, would feel more deeply, would think more deeply, would endeavour with spasmodic soberness to fall in line with the common facts of life; but the mainsprings of his character could not change. He would deceive himself, but he would never deceive her. Even now, she knew what was in his mind. He was trying to brace himself to march down the road that all his friends had taken. He was daring himself to take up the glove that the High Gods had thrown at his feet, and to take it up as he would have taken up any other challenge —with a laugh and a flourish, and the sound of trumpets in his ears. And already she knew how she would answer him.

She came up behind him and caught his elbow.

"But is this going to help you, lad?"

"It will amuse me," said the Saint. "And it's an act of piety. It's our sacred duty to see that Bertie has a journey he'll never forget. I shall open the ball by trying to touch him for a subscription to the funds of the Society for Distributing Woollen Vests to the Patriarchs of the Upper Dogsboddi. Speaking emotionally and in a loud voice I shall wax eloquent on the work that has already been done among his black brothers, and invite him to make a contribution. If he does, we'll go and drink it and think up something else. If he doesn't, you'll barge in and ask him for his autograph. Address him as Al Jolson, and ask him to sing something. After that——"

"After that," said Patricia firmly, "he'll pull the communication cord, and we shall both be thrown off the train. Lead on, boy!"

Simon nodded, and went to the door of the compartment he had marked down.

And there he stopped, statuesquely, while the skyward-slanting cigarette between his lips sank slowly through the arc of a circle and ended up at a comically contrasting droop.

After a few seconds, Patricia stepped to his side and also looked into the compartment. And the Saint took the cigarette from his mouth and exhaled smoke in a long expiring whistle.

Perrigo was gone.

There wasn't a doubt about that. The corner seat that he had occupied was as innocent of human habitation as any corner seat has ever been since George Stephenson hitched up his wagons and went rioting down to Stockton-upon-Tees. If not more so. As for the other seats, they were occupied respectively by a portly matron with a wart on her chin, a small boy in a sailor suit, and a thin-flanked female with pimples and a camouflaged copy of *The Well of*

Loneliness, into none of whom could Gunner Perrigo by any conceivable miracle of make-up have transformed himself. . . . Those were the irrefutable facts about the scene, pithily and systematically recorded; and the longer one looked at them, the more gratuitously grisly they became.

Simon singed the inoffensive air with a line of oratory that would have scorched the hide of a salamander. He did it as if his heart was in the job, which it was. Carefully and comprehensively, he covered every aspect and detail of the situation with a calorific lavishness of imagery that would have warmed the cockles of a sergeant-major's heart. Nobody and nothing, however remotely connected with the incident, was left outside the wide embrace of his oration. He started with the paleolithic progenitors of the said George Stephenson, and worked steadily down to the back teeth of Louie Elberman's grandchildren. At which point Patricia interrupted him.

"He might be having a wash or something," she said.

"Yeah!" The Saint was scathing. "Sure, he might be having a wash. And he took his bag with him in case the flies laid eggs on it. Did you notice that bag? I did. It was brand-new—hadn't a scratch on it. He'd been doing some early morning shopping before he caught the train, hustling up some kit for the voyage. All his own stuff was at Louie's, and he wouldn't risk going back there. And his bag's gone!"

The embarkation officer passed them, and opened the door of the compartment.

"Miss Lovedew?" The pimply female acknowledged it. "Your papers are quite in order——"

Simon took Patricia's arm and steered her gently away.

"Her name is Lovedew," he said sepulchrally. "Let us go and find somewhere to die."

They tottered a few steps down the corridor; and then Patricia said: "He must be still on the train! We haven't slowed up once since we started, and he couldn't have jumped off without breaking his neck——"

The Saint gripped her hands.

"You're right!" he whooped. "Pat, you're damn right! I said you wanted a brain for this sort of thing. Bertie must be on the train still, and if he's on the train we'll find him—if we have to take the whole outfit to pieces. Now, you go that way and I'll go this way, and you keep your eyes peeled. And if you see a man with a huge tufted beard, you take hold of it and give it a good pull!"

"Right-o, Saint!"

"Then let's go!"

He went flying down the alley, lurching from side to side from the rocking of the train, and contriving to light another cigarette as he went.

He did his share thoroughly. In the space of ten minutes he re-

viewed a selection of passengers so variegated that his brain began to reel. Before his eyes passed an array of physiognomies that would have made Cesare Lombroso chirrup ecstatically and reach for his tape-measure. Americans of all shapes and sizes, Englishmen in plus fours, flannel bags, and natty suitings, male children, female children, ambiguous children, large women, small women, three cosmopolitan millionaires—one fat, one thin, one sozzled—three cosmopolitan millionaire's wives—ditto, but shuffled—a novelist, an actor, a politician, four Parsees, three Hindus, two Chinese, and a wild man from Borneo. Simon Templar inspected every one of them who could by any stretch of imagination have come within the frame of the picture, and acquired sufficient data to write three books or six hundred and eighty-seven modern novels. But he did not find Gunner Perrigo.

He came to the end of the last coach, and stood gazing moodily out of the window before starting back on the return journey.

And it was while he was there that he saw a strange sight.

The first manifestation of it did not impress him immediately. It was simply a scrap of white that went drifting past the window. His eyes followed it abstractedly, and then reverted to their gloomy concentration on the scenery. Then two more scraps of white flittered past his nose, and a second later he saw a spread of red stuff fluttering feebly on the wire fence beside the line.

The Saint frowned, and watched more attentively. And a perfect cataract of whatnots began to aviate past his eyes and distribute themselves about the route. Big whatnots and little whatnots, in divers formations and half the colours of the rainbow, went wafting by the window and scattered over the fields and hedges. A mass of green taffeta flapped past, looking like a bilious vulture after an argument with a steam hammer, and was closely followed by a jaundiced cotton seagull that seemed to have suffered a similar experience. A covey of miscellaneous bits and pieces drove by in hot pursuit. No less than eight palpitating banners of assorted hues curvetted down the breeze and perched on railings and telegraph poles by the wayside. It went on until the entire landscape seemed to be littered with the loot of all the emporia of Knightsbridge and the Brompton Road.

And suddenly the meaning of it flashed upon the Saint—so suddenly and lucidly that he threw back his head and bowed before a gust of helpless mirth.

He spun round to the door beside him. He had made sure that it was locked, but he must have been mistaken. He heaved his shoulder at it, and it burst open—it had been temporarily secured with a gimlet,

as he discovered later. But at that moment he was not curious about that. He hadn't a doubt in his head that his latest and most sudden inspiraton was right, and he knew exactly what he was going to do about it.

Five minutes later, after a brief interlude for wash and brush-up purposes, he was careering blissfully back along the corridor on one of the most supremely joyous journeys of his life.

At the compartment at which Perrigo had been, he stopped, and opened the door.

"Miss Lovedew," he said pensively, and again the impetiginous female looked up and acknowledged the charge. "Is your luggage insured?"

"Of course," said the woman. "Why?"

"You should begin making out your claim immediately," said the Saint.

The woman stared.

"I don't understand you. What's happened? Are you one of the company's servants?"

"I am the head cook and bottle-washer," said the Saint gravely, "and I did not like your red flannel nighties."

He closed the door again and passed on, carolling hilariously to himself, and leaving the lady to suffer from astounded fury as well as acne.

In the Pullman he found Patricia gazing disconsolately in front of her. Her face lighted up as he arrived.

"Did you find him?"

Simon sat down.

"What luck did you have?"

"Just sweet damn-all," said the girl wryly. "I've been over my part of the train four times, and I wouldn't have missed Perrigo if he'd disguised himself as a mosquito."

"I am inspired," said the Saint.

He took the wine list and his pencil, and wrote rapidly. Then he held up the sheet and read:

"The mountains shook, the thunders came,
The very heavens wept for shame;
A Gigsworth in a white chemise
Visibly vortexed at the knees,
While Dan's defection turned quite giddy
The ghost of Ancestor Dinwiddie.
If Dan had been a common cad
It wouldn't have been half so bad;
If he had merely robbed a bank,
Or floated companies that sank,
Or, with a piece of sharp bamboo,
Bashfully bumped off Mrs. Glue;
They might have understood his whim
And, in the end, forgiven him:

Such things, though odd, have now and then
Been done by perfect gentlemen;
But Daniel's foul iniquity
Could hardly have been worse if he
Had bought (or so it seemed to them)
A chocolate after 9 p.m."

Patricia smiled. "Will you always be mad?" she asked.

"Until the day I die, please God," said the Saint.

"But if you didn't find Perrigo—"

"But I did find him!"

The girl gasped.

"You found him?"

Simon nodded; and she saw then that his eyes were laughing.

"I did. He was in the luggage van at the end, heaving mentionables and unmentionables out of a wardrobe trunk. And just for the glory of it, Pat, the trunk was labelled with the immortal name of Lovedew—I found that out afterwards and tried to break the news to her, but I don't think she believed me. Anyway, I whaled into him, and there was a breezy exchange of pleasantries. And the long and the short of it is——"

"Is——"

"That Perrigo is locked up in that trunk, just where he wanted to be; but there's an entirely new set of labels on it that are going to cause no small stir on board the *Berengaria* if Claud Eustace arrives in time. Which I expect he will—Louie is almost certain to have squealed. And all we've got to do is wait for the orchestra to tune up." Simon looked at his watch. "There's half an hour to go yet, old Pat, and I think we might stand ourselves a bottle!"

x

A CLOCK was booming the half-hour after twelve when Chief Inspector Teal climbed stiffly out of his special police car at the gates of the Ocean Dock. It had been half-past ten when he left Albany Street Police Station, and that single chime indicated that the Flying Squad driver had made a very creditable run of it from London to Southampton.

For Louie Elberman had duly squealed, as the Saint had expected, and it had been no mean squeal. Considerably stewed down after a sleepless night in the cells, he had reiterated to the Divisional Inspector the story with which he had failed to gain Teal's ear the evening before; and the tale had come through with a wealth of embellishments in the way of circumstantial detail that had made the Inspector reach hastily for the telephone and call for Mr. Teal to lend his personal patronage to the squeak.

Louie Elberman was not the only member of the cast who had spent a sleepless night. Teal had been waiting on the doorstep of his bank when it opened in the morning. He

asked casually for his balance, and in a few minutes the cashier passed a slip of paper across the counter. It showed exactly one thousand eight hundred pounds more to his credit than it should have done, and he had no need to make further inquiries. He took a taxi from the bank to Upper Berkeley Mews; but a prolonged assault on the front door elicited no response, and the relief watcher told him that Templar and the girl had gone out at nine-thirty and had not returned. Teal went back to New Scotland Yard, and it was there that the call from Albany Street found him.

And on the way down to Southampton the different fragments of the jigsaw in which he had involved himself had fitted themselves together in his head, dovetailing neatly into one another without a gap or a protuberance anywhere, and producing a shape with one coherent outline and a sickeningly simple picture lithographed upon it in three colours. So far as the raw stark facts of the case were concerned, there wasn't a leak or a loose end in the whole copper-bottomed consolidation of them. It was as puerile and patent as the most elementary exercise in kindergarten arithmetic. It sat up on its hind legs and leered at him.

Slowly and stolidly, with clenched fists buried deep in the pockets of his overcoat, Chief Inspector Teal went up the gangway of the *Berengaria* to see the story through.

And down in the well-deck aft, Simon Templar was sitting on a wardrobe trunk discoursing genially to two stewards, a porter, an irate lady with pimples, and a small group of fascinated passengers.

"I agree," the Saint was saying. "It is an outrage. But you must blame Bertie for that. I can only conclude that he doesn't like red flannel nighties either. So far as can be deduced from the circumstances, the sight of your eminently respectable robes filled him with such an uncontrollable frenzy that he began to empty the whole contents of your trunk out of the window. But am I to blame? Am I Bertie's keeper? At a moment when my back was turned——"

"I don't believe you!" stormed the irate lady. "You're a common thief, that's what you are! I should know that trunk anywhere. I can describe everything that's in it——"

"I'll bet you can't," said the Saint.

The lady appealed to the assembled spectators.

"This is unbearable!" she raved. "It's the most barefaced imposture I ever heard of! This man has stolen my clothes and put his own labels on the trunk——"

"Madam," said the Saint, "I've never disputed that the trunk, as a trunk, was yours. The labels refer to the destination of the contents. As a strictly law-abiding citizen—"

"Where," demanded the pimply female hysterically, "is the Captain?"

And at that point Teal shouldered himself into the front rank of the crowd.

Just for a second he stood looking at the Saint, and Simon saw that there were shadows under his eyes and the faintest trace of flabbiness about his cheeks. But the eyes themselves were hard and expressionless, and the lips below them were pressed up into a dour line.

"I thought I should find you here," he said.

The last of the Lovedews whirled round.

"Do you know this man?"

"Yes," said Teal rigidly. "I know him."

The Saint crossed his legs and took out a cigarette-case. He indicated the detective with a wave of his hand.

"Ladies and gentlemen," he murmured, "allow me to introduce the *deus ex machina*, or whizzbang out of the works. This is Mr. Claud Eustace Teal, who is going to tell us about his wanderings in Northern Euthanasia. Mr. Teal, Miss Lovedew. Miss Lovedew——"

"Teal?" The infuriated lady leapt back as though she had been stung. "Are you Teal?"

"That is my name," said the slightly startled detective.

"You stand there and admit that to me?"

"Yes—of course."

The woman reeled back into the arms of one of the bystanders.

"Has everyone gone mad?" she wailed. "I'm being robbed in broad daylight! That is this man's accomplice—he hasn't denied it! Can nobody do anything to stop them?"

Teal blinked.

"I'm a police officer," he said.

"You're a liar!" screamed the woman.

"My good lady——"

"Don't you dare speak to me like that! You're a low, mean, impertinent thief——"

"But——"

"I want my trunk. I'm going to have my trunk! How can I go to New York without my trunk? That is my own trunk——"

"But, Claud," said the Saint earnestly, "have you seen the trunk of the butler of her uncle? That is a trunk of the most colossal."

Miss Lovedew gazed wildly about her.

"Will no one help me?" she moaned.

Simon removed the cigarette from his mouth and stood up. He placed one foot on the trunk, rested his right forearm on his knee, and raised a hand for silence.

"May I be allowed to explain?" he said.

The woman clutched her forehead.

"Is anyone going to listen to this —this—this——"

"Gentleman?" suggested the Saint, tentatively.

Teal stepped forward and took a grip of his belt.

"I am a police officer," he re-

peated trenchantly, "and I should certainly like to hear his explanation."

This time he made the statement of his identity with such a bald authoritativeness that the buzz of surrounding comment died down to a tense hush. Even the pimply protagonist gaped at him in silence, with her assurance momentarily shaken. The stillness piled up with almost theatrical effect.

"Well?" said Teal.

The Saint gestured airily with his cigarette.

"You arrive," he said, "in time to arbitrate over a serious misunderstanding. Let me give you the facts. I travelled down by the boat train from Waterloo this morning in order to keep an eye on a friend of ours whom we'll call Bertie. During the journey I lost sight of him. I tootled around to find out what was happening to him, and eventually located him in the luggage van and in the very act of throwing the last of Miss Lovedew's what's-its out of the window."

"It's a lie!" bleated the lady, faint but pursuing. "He stole my clothes, insulted me in my carriage——"

"We come to that in a minute," said the Saint imperturbably. "As I was saying, I found Bertie just crawling into the trunk he had so unceremoniously emptied. At great personal peril and inconvenience, Claud, I helped him towards his objective and locked him up for delivery to yourself. In order to do this, I was compelled to make a temporary alteration to the labels on the trunk, which I admit I borrowed for the good cause without Miss Lovedew's permission. I made one attempt to explain the circumstances to her, but was rejected with contumely. Then, while I was waiting for you to arrive, this argument about the rightful ownership of the property began. The trunk, as I've never denied, belongs to Miss Lovedew. The dispute seems to be about Bertie."

Miss Lovedew goggled at him.

"Do you mean to say that there's a *man* in that trunk?" she demanded hideously.

"Madam," said the Saint, "there is. Would you like him? Mr. Teal has the first claim, but I'm open to competitive offers. The specimen is in full running order, suffering at the moment from a black eye and an aching jaw, but otherwise complete and ready for the road. He is highly-strung and sensitive, but extremely virile. Fed on a diet of rye whisky and caviar——"

Teal bent over the trunk and examined the labels. The name on them was his own. He straightened up and levelled his gaze inflexibly upon the Saint.

"I'll talk to you alone for a moment," he said.

"Pleasure," said the Saint briefly.

The detective looked round.

"That trunk is not to be touched without my permission," he said.

He walked over to the rail, and

Simon Templar strolled along by his side. They passed out of earshot of the crowd, and stopped. For a few seconds they eyed each other steadily.

"Is that Perrigo you've got in that trunk?" Teal asked presently.

"None other."

"We've had a full confession from Elberman. Do you know what the penalty is for being in possession of illicit diamonds?"

"I know what the penalty is for being caught in possession of illicit diamonds," said the Saint circumspectly.

"Do you know where those diamonds are now?"

Simon nodded.

"They are sewn into the seat of Perrigo's pants," he said.

"Is that what you wanted Perrigo for?"

The Saint leaned on the rail.

"You know, Claud," he remarked, "you're the damnedest fool."

Teal's eyes hardened.

"Why?"

"Because you're playing the damnedest fool game with me. Have you ever known me be an accessory to wanton murder?"

"I've known you to be mixed up in some darned funny things."

"You've never known me to be mixed up in anything as darned funny as that. But you work yourself up to the point where you're ready to believe anything you want to believe. It's the racket. It's dog eating dog. I beat you to something, and you get mad. When you get mad, I have to bait you. The more I bait you, the madder you get. And the madder you get, the more I have to bait you. We get so's nothing's too bad for us to do to each other." The Saint smiled. "Well, Claud, I'm taking a little holiday, and before I go I'm giving you a break."

Teal shrugged mountainously, but for a moment he said nothing. And the Saint balanced his cigarette on his thumbnail and flipped it far and wide.

"Let me do some thinking for you," he said. "I'm great on doing other people's thinking for them these days. . . . Overnight you thought over what I said to you last evening. This morning you verified that I hadn't been bluffing. And you knew there was only one thing for you to do. Your conscience wouldn't let you lie down under what I'd done. You'd got to take what was coming to you—arrest me, and face the music. You'd got to play square with yourself, even if it broke you. I know just how you felt. I admire you for it. But I'm not going to let you do it."

"No?"

"Not in these trousers," said the Saint. "Why should you? You've got Perrigo, and I'm ready for a short rest. And here's your surprise packet. Get busy on what it tells you, and you may be a superin-

tendent before the end of the season."

Teal glanced at the book which the Saint had thrust into his hands, and turned it over thoughtfully.

Then he looked again at the Saint. His face was still as impassive as the face of a graven image, but a little of the chilled steel had gone out of his eyes. And, as he looked, he saw that the Saint was laughing again—the old, unchangeable, soundless, impudent Saintly laughter. And the blue imps in the Saint's eyes danced.

"I play the game by my own rules, Claud," said the Saint. "Don't you forget it. That profound philosophy covers the craziest things I do. It also makes me the only man in this bleary age who enjoys every minute of his life. And"—for the last time in that story, the Saintly forefinger drove gaily and debonairly to its mark—"if you take a leaf out of my book, Claud, one day, Claud, you will have fun and games for ever."

And then the Saint was gone.

He departed in the Saintly way, with a last Saintly smile and the clap of a hand on the detective's shoulder; and Teal watched him go without a word.

Patricia was waiting for him farther along the deck. He fell into step beside her, and they went down the gangway and crossed the quay. At the corner of a warehouse Simon stopped. Quite quietly he looked at her, propping up the building with one hand.

And the girl knew what his silence meant. For him, the die was cast; and, being the man he was, he was ready to pay cash. His hand was in his pocket, and the smile hadn't wavered on his lips. But just for that moment he was taking his unflinching farewell of the fair fields of irresponsible adventure, understanding just what it would mean to him to pay the score, scanning the road ahead with the steady eyes that had never feared anything in this life. And he was ready to start the journey there and then.

And Patricia smiled. She had never loved him more than she did at that moment; but she smiled with nothing but the smile behind her eyes. And she answered before he had spoken.

"Boy," she said, "I couldn't be happier than I am now."

He did not move. She went on, quickly:

"Don't say it, Simon! I don't want you to. Haven't we both got everything we want as it is? Isn't life splendid enough? Aren't we going to have more adventures, and —and——"

"Fun and games for ever?"

"Yes! Aren't we? Why spoil the magic? I won't listen to you. Even if we've missed out on this adventure——"

Suddenly he laughed. His hands went to his hips. She had been wait-

ing for that laugh. She had put all she was into the task of winning it. And, with that laugh, the spell that had held his eyes so quiet and steady was broken. She saw the leap of the old mirth and glamour lighting them again. She was happy.

"Pat, is that really what you want?"

"It's everything I want."

"To go on with the fighting and the fun? To go on racketing around the world, doing everything that's utterly and gloriously mad—swaggering, swashbuckling, singing—showing all these dreary old dogs what can be done with life—not giving a damn for anyone—robbing the rich, helping the poor—plaguing the pompous—killing dragons, pulling policemen's legs——"

"I'm ready for it all!"

He caught her hands.

"Are you sure?"

"Positive."

"Not one tiny little doubt about it?"

"Not one."

"Then we can start this minute."

She stared.

"What do you mean?" she asked.

The Saint loosened his belt and pointed downwards. Even then, she didn't understand.

"Remember how I found Bertie? He was halfway into the Lovedew's wardrobe trunk. We had a short but merry scrap. And then he went on in. Well, during the tumult and the shouting, and the general excitement, in the course of which Bertie soaked up one of the juiciest K.O.s I've ever distributed——"

He broke off and the girl turned round in amazed perplexity.

From somewhere on the *Berengaria* had pealed out the wild and frantic shriek of an irreparably outraged camel collapsing under the last intolerable straw.

Patricia turned again, her face blank with bewilderment.

"What on earth was that?" she asked.

The Saint smiled seraphically.

"That was the death-cry of old Pimply-face. They've just opened her trunk and discovered Bertie. And he has no trousers on. We can begin our travels right now," said the Saint.

fatal facsimile

by . . . Fredric Brown

It was on a Monday that Mr. Henry Smith, agent for the Phalanx Insurance Company, called on Mr. James Brock—whom he knew slightly as a fellow coin collector and fellow member of the Numismatics Club—to attempt to interest him in insurance. He failed to interest Mr. Brock in a policy, but he spent a pleasant hour, nevertheless, in Mr. Brock's study, looking at and discussing Mr. Brock's collection of American coins.

It was a moderately extensive collection—even larger than Mr. Smith's own—although it tended toward quantity rather than quality, few of the coins being in mint condition and most of the rare dates either missing or represented by coins in poor condition and therefore of little value. Only a coin collector knows that or understands why a worn coin, even of a rare date, is almost worthless to a collector. Nevertheless, on a basis of sheer quantity, Mr. Brock's collection must have represented an investment of nearly a thousand dollars, plus another hundred or so for the cabinets—with sliding draw-

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Fredric Brown, author of the recently published FIVE-DAY NIGHTMARE (Dutton) and many other novels, has long been considered one of the most distinguished writers in this field. There has been, particularly in his novels set in the South West, a socio-documentary quality (and clarity) to his writings which have made these novels not only very much "alive", but also recognizable portraits of the times in which we live.

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ers in which the coins were kept behind glass—in which the collection was housed.

"By the way, Mr. Brock," Mr. Smith said, "I have been told by a mutual acquaintance that you have a brother here in town who also collects coins, but that he does not belong to the Numismatics Club. Why don't you bring him around?"

Brock smiled. "He wouldn't care to come, I'm afraid. He's not—ah—very socially inclined. A bit of a recluse, in fact."

"Does he have a large collection?"

"About the size of mine," Brock said.

"I'd enjoy seeing it. Also, I might possibly find him a prospect for insurance. Would you mind if I called to see him sometime, and used your name?"

"You'd be wasting your time, Mr. Smith. He's—well, eccentric. Besides, he's a bachelor, living alone and with no heirs—unless I'm his heir. And since he likes and trusts nobody but me, I suppose I am. And since he has more than enough money for his own funeral expenses, he'd see no reason for wanting a policy."

"I can see that," Mr. Smith admitted. "But does he own his own house? We sell fire insurance, too, you know."

"He owns a two room bungalow. But he wouldn't trust an insurance company, I fear. He doesn't even believe in banks. Lost some in one that went bust during the depression. I'm afraid he's a hopeless prospect for you."

"But would you mind if I saw him and said I was an acquaintance of yours?"

"Oh, not at all. You may even say you're a friend of mine—which is why I'm trying to save you trouble. But if you haven't anything better to do, why, he lives at thirteen thirty-two Bleeker Street. No phone. And his name is Brockerton. I shortened mine to Brock for business reasons. Easier to remember."

"Thank you, Mr. Brock. What does your brother do, if I may ask?"

"He's a cabinetmaker. Made these cabinets for my collection, by the way. Has a little shop in back of his house."

"Thank you," said Mr. Smith again. "By the way, Mr. Brock, I've never happened to ask—what's *your* line of work?"

"I am an insurance salesman," Brock said.

Mr. Henry Smith took his departure leisurely and with a completely unruffled exterior. If there was any anger in him that another insurance salesman had let him make a fool of himself—trying for almost half an hour to sell a policy where a policy obviously couldn't be sold, the anger didn't show. He even asked Brock for which company he worked and talked insurance—from a completely different angle

—for a moment or two before he left.

Even seeing Mr. Smith getting into his car outside the house of his fellow collector and rival salesman, you'd never have guessed that he was deeply irked.

He looked as bland and as composed as ever, from his carefully brushed derby hat to his carefully polished black oxfords. Before starting to drive away he took off his gold-rimmed pince-nez glasses that he wore for all purposes except driving and, as always, polished them carefully before putting them into his pocket.

He drove with his usual concentration, never exceeding thirty miles an hour. But instead of driving to see the next prospect on his list, he drove home—to think. The joke that Brock had played on him rankled. The best practical answer that he could think of would be to sell a policy—any kind of policy; it didn't matter on what or how small—to Brock's eccentric brother.

Oh, there was a better answer to the joke than that—to sell a policy to Brock himself. But even Mr. Henry Smith—the best salesman the Phalanx Insurance Company had ever had—didn't quite see how *that* could be done.

Even Brock's brother, from everything Brock had said about him, was next door to impossible. But Mr. Henry Smith had done things that were next door to impossible before. There were two angles; first, he'd better see Brockerton right away, today, before Brock happened to see him again and mention the matter, thereby prejudicing him—even further than he would already be prejudiced—in advance. The second angle was the fact that the approach would have to be unusual. Common interest in coin collecting would be the best bet. Then, perhaps, getting Brockerton to make a cabinet for his collection; Mr. Smith had been thinking of getting one better than the one which currently housed his collection and the sample he'd seen in Brock's study was proof that, however eccentric he was otherwise, Brockerton was an excellent cabinetmaker.

Driving to and from his home, Mr. Smith planned his campaign carefully and while he was there he pocketed—for use as conversation pieces—a few of the best items from his collection, ones that had been noticeably missing from Brock's. Maybe, for the purpose of building confidence, he'd even do some swapping with Brockerton—at whatever loss. Feeling as he felt at that moment, Mr. Smith would gladly have taken a thousand dollar loss in order to sell Brockerton a policy on which his own commission would be ten or twenty dollars—just for the sake of showing that policy to Brock and thanking him for the lead that had led to the sale.

He parked his car at the curb in

front of 1332 Bleeker Street, adjusted his derby first, and his pince-nez glasses second, both very carefully, and rang the doorbell.

He smiled his best smile as the door opened. He said, "My name is Henry Smith. You are Mr. Brockerton?"

"Yes." It didn't sound encouraging and the door didn't open any wider than the few inches at which it stood.

"Your brother, Mr. Brock, suggested that I drop in and see you. Inasmuch as we are both coin collectors—"

The door slammed shut.

Mr. Henry Smith peered at it curiously and then rapped on it quietly but firmly before the man inside could move far away. The door opened again, no wider than before. Brockerton said, "I'm not interested in meeting—"

Mr. Smith held up a hand. "You misunderstand, Mr. Brockerton. What I am interested in is having a cabinet made. I greatly admire the workmanship and design of your brother's—"

"Sorry. Full up. Got all the work I can handle."

The door closed again, less noisily but with a finality that Mr. Smith decided not to disturb. Not just then, anyway.

He sighed and went away to work out a fresh approach for another time. Obviously selling Mr. Brockerton a policy was going to be almost as impossible as selling one to his brother.

On the next day, a Tuesday, Mr. Henry Smith spent his leisure moments thinking about the problem, but getting nowhere. He knew that the odds were terrific and that he was being quite childish to persist in wanting moral vengeance on Mr. Brock, but there it was.

He thought about it when he went to bed that night and worked out three possibilities.

At breakfast, he read the morning paper and abandoned all three of them. Mr. Brockerton was dead.

Nine o'clock found Mr. Smith seated in the office of his friend Captain Arthur Wayne of the Detective Bureau of the City of Springfield.

"Yes, Henry?" Wayne said. "Hope you're not going to try to sell me more insurance. You've got me loaded now, and what with the way prices are going up—"

"No, Arthur. I want to talk to you about the Mr. Brockerton who died—or was killed, whichever way you wish to put it—last night."

Wayne sighed. "Hope you can do better on it than we can. Did you know him?"

"Ah—very casually. Or perhaps casually is not the word. I talked to him for a few seconds, Monday afternoon."

"To sell him insurance?"

Mr. Smith smiled slightly. "Well, I did have that in mind as an ultimate objective, but we didn't even

approach the matter in our brief conversation. However, that is beside the point."

"Which is?"

"It is at least conceivable that I was the last person—aside from the —ah—burglar or murderer—to have seen him alive. I gather he did not have many social contacts or see many people. Have you found anyone who saw him after Monday afternoon?"

"You gather correctly, Henry, about the social contacts. But you're cleared of suspicion. Two people saw him yesterday, Tuesday. The mailman, for one. Brockerton opened the door while the mailman was putting mail into the box. And late in the afternoon, the grocer's delivery boy handed some groceries in at the back door—Brockerton had telephoned in the order."

"I see. Then my evidence concerning Monday afternoon is not of importance. Is the story in the morning paper substantially correct or are any of the facts in error?"

Captain Wayne sighed. "Then I take it you're interested? All right, I'll give. But first tell me how you happened to look him up at all. A screwball miser who doesn't even trust banks doesn't sound to me like a good insurance prospect."

"I fear he wasn't," Mr. Smith admitted. He told Wayne the story of how his interview with Brock had led him to Brockerton.

Wayne grinned. "So Brock took you for a buggy ride, Henry. Well, it'd be nice if you could get your revenge by pinning his brother's murder on him, but you can't."

"He was out of town, as the paper stated?"

"We were able to check that pretty thoroughly. Yes, he was out of town and it checks perfectly. His alibi is solid, for hours both ways from the time of the murder."

"You are calling it a murder, then?"

"Of course. Technically, he died of heart failure. But he died of heart failure because he was tied up and the killer working on him with a hot poker. That's near enough murder to suit me."

"Were the other facts correct as the newspaper gave them this morning?"

"I don't know. I haven't read the paper this morning, Henry. But there isn't much to tell, so here goes. At eleven o'clock last night the patrolman on that beat noticed that lights were on in all three rooms of Brockerton's cottage—that is, the two rooms of the cottage itself and the workroom built on at the back. That was unusual because Brockerton always went to bed at ten o'clock sharp—and before ten, even, he never had the lights on in more than one room at a time. Still, it was his business if he wanted to stay up later, and the patrolman—Hosworth's his name—didn't do anything about it until he went by on his next round about half past

twelve and all the lights were still on.

"That time he rang the doorbell and when it wasn't answered, he walked around the house to try the back door, but before he got there he saw a window open and saw that there were marks of a jimmy on the sill. He went in and found Brockerton tied up, gagged, and dead. And the house practically upside down from having been searched. Outside of making sure Brockerton was dead and that the murderer wasn't still in the house, he didn't disturb anything till homicide got there."

"According to the paper," Mr. Smith said, "Brockerton's shoes were off and his feet had been burned. Is that correct?"

"Yes. The burns weren't too bad; apparently he'd just started on that, but Brockerton's heart wouldn't take it. Brockerton was gagged of course, so he couldn't scream, but one of his arms was free from the elbow down and there was a pencil and pad on the floor by him, so it's obvious how he was supposed to tell where he'd hidden his dough. By the way, Henry, do you notice anything—uh—that doesn't fit, in what I've told you?"

"I'm afraid I don't."

"Jimmying a window makes a lot of noise. Why didn't Brockerton hear it and phone us—or do something?"

"Oh, that. The newspaper story covered it, Arthur. It said that Brockerton habitually took a walk early every evening, generally just after dark. They—I mean you—haven't found anyone yet who saw him doing so yesterday evening in particular, but if it was a habit of his, it's probable that he did. If the burglar knew of that habit, he probably watched for Brockerton to leave and broke in while he was gone, then waited just inside the front door—with a blackjack in his hand—for Brockerton to return."

"Damn," said Wayne. "Thought I'd caught you for once, Henry. Yes, that's the way it undoubtedly happened. The coroner's examination showed the bump where he'd been blackjacked, just hard enough to knock him out for a few minutes, long enough to tie him up. That, by the way, makes it probable the whole thing was a professional job. The fact that he was hit just right. So, by the way, do the other facts. The way the jimmy was used, the way the searching was done.

"Yes, he must have got in while Brockerton was taking a walk, sapped him when he came in, tied him up and started to work on him to make him tell where the money was. Brockerton must have died almost right away; coroner's report said he probably died between eight o'clock and half past eight. And at a guess, the murderer spent one to two hours on the search before he left; he was probably gone by the time the patrolman noticed the

lights burning at eleven. At least, I hope he was gone by then; I'd hate to think he might have been caught if our man had made his investigation at eleven instead of half past twelve."

"I see," said Mr. Smith. "And according to the paper, it is not known whether the murderer got what he was after or not. Is that still true?"

"Dammit, yes. Although the question seems mainly to be whether Brockerton really had a cache of money in the house or not. If he did have, the killer must have got it; anyway, *we* can't find it. There's no definite sign, though, that a cache was uncovered. And the only thing we know to be gone is the coins from one tray in the big cabinet he kept his collection in—the gold coins. According to the holes in that tray—the coins fit down into holes just the right size, you know, with glass over them—he must have got about five hundred dollars' worth of gold coins, face value. Guess he didn't figure the other coins would be worth digging out, since he wouldn't have known which of them were valuable, if any, and the whole lot would have been an awful mess to carry. Hard to dispose of, too."

"Don't you think, Arthur, that the fact that he took those gold coins indicates he probably didn't find any major cache of money? I mean, if he'd found—what's the best guess as to what Brockerton had?"

"Not a big fortune. But probably five or ten thousand dollars, maybe a little more. I see what you mean, Henry. If he'd found *that,* he wouldn't have taken the time and trouble to break into the collection for a few hundred dollars' worth of gold coins; he'd have wanted to get out of there quickly. It does look like he took the gold coins for consolation when he couldn't find the main cache."

"What's your authority for that five to ten thousand dollar estimate?"

"The sister-in-law, Mrs. Brock. She says her husband had made the guess that his brother had at least that much saved up and stashed away."

"Why the indirect source? Haven't you asked Brock himself?"

"Isn't back yet. He probably doesn't know yet that his brother's dead. He's on his way home now, driving, and we can't get in touch with him. You see, he left Monday afternoon—must have been shortly after he talked to you, Henry—and drove to attend a one-day convention of his company's salesmen. We've checked and found out that he was with a gang of other salesmen yesterday evening—all evening till after midnight. Then he decided to drive back home without spending the night, and he's still somewhere on the road. Should be back by now—but he probably

pulled off the road to sleep a couple of hours. We're anxious to talk to him; he may have some idea, even if it's only a guess, where his brother kept the money."

"I'm sure he has," said Mr. Smith.

Captain Wayne stared at Mr. Smith. Mr. Smith took off his gold rimmed pince-nez glasses and polished them carefully, then replaced them and looked at Wayne.

He said, "But, Arthur, I might be able to anticipate him. Did Mr. Brockerton ever make trips out of Springfield?"

"Yes. He'd go away for a day or two once every few months."

"I thought he might. And, in looking through his workshop, did you chance to find any casting and plating equipment?"

"Yes, both. Apparently he made his own hinges and hardware for special jobs. He—" Wayne broke off and stared at Mr. Smith.

"Exactly," said Mr. Smith. "Brockerton was obviously no numismatist. No coin collector can ever resist an opportunity to show off his collection to a fellow collector. He was even averse enough to discussing collecting that he refused to consider making me a cabinet for my collection, knowing that it would involve showing me his own cabinet and collection and knowing he might give himself away in so doing. You see—"

"Just a minute, Henry." Captain Wayne picked up the phone on his desk and dialed a number. A moment later he said, "Kerry? This is Wayne. Listen, take some of the coins out of that cabinet and scratch them. . . . Yeah, I said scratch them. With a knife. See if they stay the same color. I'll hold the line."

"You see," said Mr. Smith, while Wayne held the line, "he could have got the idea from his brother's collection. And borrowed his brother's coins—a few at a time—and cast replicas of them in gold, then plated them with copper or silver. If his collection is about the size of his brother's, I'd say it was worth at least ten thousand dollars. And what a beautiful way for a miser to keep his gold—right where he could look at it, and yet perfectly hidden. And what burglar is going to a lot of trouble to get some old pennies, nickels and dimes that he couldn't get rid of easily and safely anyway? It was such a perfect hiding place that even *you* didn't find it, with all night to search for it.

"And think of his pleasure in being able to look at a tray of pennies and know that each one of them is solid gold, with a light plating of copper to conceal it! But I thought he probably wouldn't buy his gold locally, and that's why I wanted to make sure he did make trips out of town. Probably bought it a little at a time from various jewelry supply houses and—"

"Hold it, Henry." Wayne was

listening to the earpiece of the telephone. After a minute he said, "Thanks, Kerry," and hung up.

He said, "You were wrong, Henry."

"No," said Mr. Smith. "You have a good poker face, but it's not that good. I'm right."

Wayne sighed. "It's a good thing for criminals that you sell insurance, Henry. Yes, you're right. Kerry scratched a couple of pennies —one recent one and one of the old big ones—and two silver coins. All four of them were solid, soft gold, thinly plated."

"Of course," said Mr. Smith. "There would be no need to plate them thickly, as they would have little or no wear."

Wayne sighed again. "Well, at least we know that the criminal didn't get the money. But it doesn't help us catch him, does it?"

"Of course it does. Don't you see how?"

The detective captain shook his head slowly. And then, when Mr. Smith told him, he lost his poker face completely; he ended his listening with his mouth slightly ajar.

It was on a Wednesday evening, two weeks later, that the telephone in Mr. Henry Smith's neat two-room bachelor apartment rang. He answered it. His caller identified himself as Mr. Brock and sounded excited. "Been trying to get in touch with you, Mr. Smith," he said. "Called at your office several times this afternoon, but—"

"You've decided to buy a policy?" Mr. Smith asked.

"Don't be—Captain Wayne called me this afternoon. He told me that the murderer of my brother has been caught—in Cleveland. And he told me that you'd done it. I don't mean caught him yourself, but you gave him information that enabled the police to catch him. *How?*"

"Didn't the captain tell you?" Mr. Smith asked. He knew quite well that Wayne hadn't; he'd asked him not to.

"No, dammit, he wouldn't! I don't know why. But listen, I'm free this evening. Are you?"

"As it happens, yes, Mr. Brock. Would you care to drop over and talk for a while? You've never seen my collection, and I have some beer in the refrigerator."

"Sure, thanks. I'll be there in fifteen minutes."

Mr. Smith's doorbell rang in thirteen minutes. Brock came in, looking a bit embarrassed and more than a bit curious. Mr. Smith seated him gravely and served him beer. He asked him how well his insurance business was going.

Brock grinned. He said, "All right, you've got me over a barrel. I apologize abjectly. It was unforgivable to let you spend half an hour trying to sell me insurance. Guess there's only one way I can make amends. With the money I'm inheriting from my brother, I can

afford more coverage than I have. And—aside from the joke I played on you—I really owe you plenty for whatever it was you did to bring about the capture of my brother's killer. Will you sell me a five thousand dollar policy?"

Mr. Smith grinned back. "That's what I wanted you to say, Mr. Brock. No, I won't; it wouldn't really be ethical. You should take your additional insurance in your own company. But I consider my vengeance complete, and I'll tell you what you want to know. You knew—I mean you knew all along—that your brother's coin collection was a fake; that the coins were gold, plated with silver or copper, did you not?"

"Of course. I was the only one who did know."

Mr. Smith nodded. "Then you should have made the further inference that I suggested to my friend Captain Wayne. You see it was inevitable that the murderer would sooner or later try to sell or exchange for spendable paper money the gold coins he had taken. Probably a few at a time. And he would probably take the comparatively recent ones—on which there would be no great premium value—to a bank, would he not?"

"Yes, I see that. But good Lord, there are so many banks. How could all of them be notified?"

"It wasn't necessary to notify every bank. Merely every police department—and the United States Treasury Department—to notify the Springfield police whenever a man was arrested for trying to pass coins made of lead plated with gold. Don't you see, Mr. Brock, that when your brother went to such—ah—eccentric lengths to hide his gold, he would be consistent in hiding *all* of it? Your brother must have had a sense of humor to have rounded out his collection with a few gold coins in addition to the others, for would it not have been completely inconsistent with his character for him to have kept—ready to a burglar's hand—a tray of *real* gold coins in an unlocked cabinet?

"And now would you care to see *my* collection of coins, Mr. Brock?"

the liar

by . . . William Faulkner

FOUR MEN SAT comfortably on the porch of Gibson's store, facing the railroad tracks and two nondescript yellow buildings. The two buildings belonged to the railroad company, hence they were tidy in an impersonal way, and were painted the same prodigious yellow. The store, not belonging to the railroad company, was not painted. It squatted stolidly against a rising hill, so that the proprietor could sit at ease, spitting into the valley, and watch the smoke-heralded passing of casual trains. The store and the proprietor resembled each other, slovenly and comfortable; and it was seldom that the owner's was the only chair tilted against the wall, and his the only shavings littering the floor.

Today he had four guests. Two of these had ridden in from the hills for trivial necessities, the other two had descended from the morning's local freight; and they sat in easy amity, watching the smoke from the locomotive dwindle away down the valley.

William Faulkner was 27 years old when he first lived in New Orleans and, beginning to write fiction, contributed a number of sketches to the Sunday feature section of the New Orleans Times-Picayune, *published in 1958 by Rutgers University Press as NEW ORLEANS SKETCHES, with an introduction by Dr. Carvel Collins, Professor of English at M.I.T., who has lectured widely on Faulkner in this country and abroad.*

From: William Faulkner's NEW ORLEANS SKETCHES (Carvel Collins, ed.) Rutgers University Press. Copyright © 1958 by Rutgers, The State University. Reprinted by permission.

"Who's that feller, coming up from the deepo?" spoke one at last. The others followed his gaze and the stranger mounted the path from the station under their steady provincial stare. He was roughly dressed—a battered felt hat, a coarse blue cloth jacket and corduroy trousers—a costume identical with that of at least one of the watchers.

"Never seen him before. He don't live hereabouts, that I know of," murmured the proprietor. "Any of you boys know him?"

They shook their heads. "Might be one of them hill fellers. They stays back yonder all the year round, some of 'em ain't never been out." The speaker, a smallish man with a large round bald head and a long saturnine face in which his two bleached eyes were innocent and keen—like a depraved priest—continued: "Feller over to Mitchell says one of 'em brung his whole family into town one day last month to let 'em see a train. Train blowed, and his wife and six-seven children started milling round kind of nervous; but when she come in sight around the bend the whole bunch broke for the woods.

"Old man Mitchell himself had drove down fer his paper, and them hill folks run right spang over his outfit: tore his buggy all to pieces and scart his hoss so bad it took 'em till next day noon to catch him. Yes, sir, heard 'em whooping and hollering all night, trying to head that hoss into something with a fence around it. They say he run right through old Mis' Harmon's house—" The narrator broke down over his own invention. His audience laughed too, enjoying the humor, but tolerantly, as one laughs at a child. His fabling was well known. And though like all peoples who live close to the soil, they were by nature veracious, they condoned his unlimited imagination for the sake of the humor he achieved and which they understood.

The laughter ceased, for the newcomer was near. He mounted the shaky steps and stood among them, a dark-favored man. "Morning, gentlemen," he greeted them without enthusiasm.

The proprietor, as host, returned his greeting. The others muttered something, anything, as was the custom. The stranger entered the store and the owner rose reluctantly and luxuriously to follow him.

"Say," spoke the raconteur, "ever notice how spry Will is for trade? See him jump up when a customer comes in, and nigh tromps his heels off herding him inside? Minds me of the time—"

"Shet up, Ek," another told him equably. "You already told one lie this morning. Give a man time to smoke a pipe betwixt 'em, leastways. Mebbe that stranger'd like to hear ye. And Will'd hate to miss it, too." The others guffawed, and spat.

Gibson and his customer returned; the proprietor sank with a

sigh into his chair and the other, bearing a piece of cheese and a paper sack of crackers, lowered himself onto the top step, his back against a post, partly facing them. He began his meal while they stared at him, gravely and without offense, as children, and all whose desires and satisfactions are simple, can.

"Say, Will," said one after a while, "you come near missing one of Ek's yarns. Us fellers stopped him, though. Now, Ek, you kin go ahead."

"Lissen," said the one called Ek, readily, "all you boys think that ever' time I open my mouth it's to do a little blanket stretching, but lemme tell you something cur'ous that reely happened. 'Twas like this—"

He was interrupted. "H'y, Will, git out yer hoss medicine: Ek's took sick."

"Musta had a stroke. We kept telling him ter stay outen them sunny fields."

"Yes, sir; shows what work'll do fer you."

"No, boys, it's that licker them Simpson boys makes: Makes a man tell the truth all the time. Sho' better keep it outen the courts, or ever'body'll be in jail."

Ek had vainly striven to surmount the merriment. "You fellers don't know nothing," he roared. "Feller comes trying to tell you the truth—" They shouted him down again, and Will Gibson summed the matter up.

"Why, Ek, we ain't doubting your ability to tell the truth when it's necessary, like in court or meeting house; but they ain't no truth ever happened as entertaining as your natural talk, hey boys? He's better'n a piece in the theayter, ain't he, fellers?"

The others assented loudly, but Ek refused to be mollified. He sat in offended dignity. The others chuckled at intervals, but at last the merriment was gone and there was no sound save the stranger's methodical crunching. He, seemingly, had taken no part in the laughter. Far up the valley a train whistled; echo took the sound and toyed with it, then let it fade back into silence.

But silence was unbearable to Ek. At last it overcame his outraged dignity. "Say," he went easily into narrative, "lemme tell you something cur'ous that reely happened to me yest'day. I was over to Mitchell yest'day waiting for the early local, when I meets up with Ken Rogers, the sheriff. We passed the time of day and he says to me, what am I doing today, and I tells him I aim to ride No. 12 over home. Then he says he's looking for somebody like me, asking me wasn't I raised in the hills. I tells him I was, and how when I turned twenty-one, paw decided I had ought to wear shoes. I hadn't never worn no shoes, and was young and skittish as a colt in them days.

"Well, sir, you may believe it or not, but when they come to my pallet that morning with them new shoes, I up and lit out of there in my shirt tail and took to the woods. Paw sent word around to the neighbors and they organized a hunt same as a bear hunt, with axes and ropes and dogs. No guns, though; paw held that to shoot me would be a waste of manpower, as I could stand up to a day's work with any of 'em.

"Well, sir, it took 'em two days to git me, and they only got me then when them big man-eating hounds of Lem Haley's put me up a tree in Big Sandy bottom, twenty miles from home. And mebbe you won't believe it, but it took paw and three strong men to put them shoes on me." He led the laughter himself, which the stranger joined. "Yes, sir; them was the days. But lemme see, I kind of got off the track. Where was I? Oh, yes. Well, the sheriff he says to me can't I go back in the hills a ways with him. And I says, well, I dunno; I got some business in Sidon to tend to today—"

"Same business you're tending to now, I reckon?" interrupted one of his audience. "Got to git back where folks believe him when he says he's telling the truth."

"Now, look-a-here," began the affronted narrator, when the proprietor interfered. "Hush up, you Lafe; let him finish his tale. G'on, Ek, won't nobody bother you again."

Ek looked at him in gratitude and resumed. "Well, listen. The sheriff, he says to me, he needs a man that knows them hill folks to go in with him. Been some trouble of some kind and he wants to clear it up. But them hill people is so leary that they's liable to shoot first, before a man kin state his point. So he wants I should go along with him and kind of mollify 'em, you might say, promising to get me back in time to catch the evening train. Well, they ain't nothing I couldn't put off a day or so, so I goes with him. He's got his car all ready and a deppity waiting, so we piles in and lit out.

"It was as putty a day as I ever see and we was having a good time, laughing and talking back and forth—"

Lafe interrupted again: "Must of been, with a set of fellers't never heard your lies before."

"Be quiet, Lafe," Gibson commanded peremptorily.

"—and first thing I knew, we come to a place where the road played out altogether. 'Have to walk from here on,' sheriff says, so we runs the car off the road a ways, and struck out afoot. Well, sir, I was born and raised in them hills, but I never seen that stretch where we was before—all ridges, and gullies where you could sling a hoss off and lose him. Finally the sheriff says to me: 'Ek,' he says, 'place

we're heading for is jest across that ridge. You go on over to the house, and tell Mrs. Starnes who you are; and Tim and me'll go around yonder way. Probably catch Joe in his lower field. We'll meet you at the house. Might ask Mis' Starnes if she kin git us a little snack ready.'

"'All right, sheriff,' I says, 'but I don't know nobody through here.'

"'That's all right,' sheriff says, 'jest go up to the house and tell her me and Joe and Tim'll be 'long soon.' And him and Tim started on around the ridge, and I took the route he give me. Well, sir, I moseyed on up to the top of the ridge, and sho' 'nough, there was a house and a barn setting in the next valley. It didn't look like much of a farm and I just decided them Starneses was average shif'less hill folks. There was a lot of rocks on the ridge where I was, and just as I was thinking what a good place for snakes it was and starting on down to'rds the house—bzzzrrr! went something right behind me. Gentlemen, I jumped twenty foot and lit grabbing rocks. When I had throwed a couple the rattler was gone into a hole; and then I seen three others laying with their heads mashed, and I knowed I must of stumbled into a regular den of 'em. They hadn't been dead long, and from the sample I'd had I knowed how mad the others must be, so I lit a shuck out of there. But I wasn't far from the feller had killed them three, but just how close I never learnt till later.

"I dropped on down through the brush, coming to the house from behind. Down the hill from the barn and between me and the house was a spring in a rocky gully. The spring was railed off from cattle. There was gullies and rocks ever'where: I never seen such pore, rocky land—sink holes full of rocks and narrer as wells. I had to jump 'em like a goat.

"I was about half-way down the hill when I seen a feller moving down at the spring. I hadn't seen him before. He jest wasn't there when I looked once, but there he was when I looked again, rising up by the spring. He had a wooden box under his arm. I never knowed where he come from.

"Knowing how skittish them hill folks are, I was jest about to sing out when he put his finger in his mouth and whistled. I thought mebbe he was calling his dog, and I was thinking to myself it was a sorry dog that never suspicioned me when I was this close, when a woman came to the back door of the house. She stood there a minute, shading her eyes and looking all around at the ridges, but she never did look to'rds the spring. Then she stepped out, toting something in her hand, and started fer the spring on the run. Then I could see she had her Sunday hat on, and that

the thing in her hand was a carpet-bag. Fellers, she jest flew down that hill.

"'Uh, uh,' thinks I to myself, 'they's something going on here that I don't know about, and that Starnes don't know nothing about, neither.' The sheriff seemed mighty certain he wouldn't be to home, and I never seen a man and wife go to all that trouble to go anywheres.

"Well, sir, they met at the spring. The feller had set his little box down careful, and they was clamped together like two sheep in a storm, and was a-kissing. 'Uh, uh!' thinks I, 'here's something else me and Starnes don't know nothing about, and what'd make him itch if he did.' I was higher up than them two, and I taken a look around fer sheriff and Tim, and I seen a lone feller coming down the valley. They couldn't see him a tall, but jest when I seen him, he spied them. He stopped a minute like he was studying, then he come on, not hiding exactly, but walking careful.

"Meanwhile, them two at the spring was bent over the feller's little box, and I seen her jump back and kind of squeal. Well, sir, things was getting cur'ouser and cur'ouser ever' minute, and I was a-wishing and a-griping for sheriff and Tim to git there. 'If sheriff's wanting something to clear up,' I thinks to myself, 'I got it here waiting fer him.' And about then things begun to pop.

"Them two at the spring looked up all on a sudden. They had either seen or heard the other feller; so he walked in bold as you please. The woman she kind of comes behind the first feller; then she drops her bag and makes a bee-line fer the other one, the feller that jest come up, and tries to grab him round the neck. He flings her off and she fell flat, but jumped up and tried to grab him again.

"Well, sir, she kep' on trying to hold his arm and he kep' on a-flinging her off, all the time walking not fast but steady to'rds number one. Finally she sees she can't stop 'em, so she backed off with her hands kind of against her side, and I can see she is scared most to death. Them two fellers is about a yard apart, when number two hauled off and knocked the other one clean into the spring. He jumped up right way and grabbed up a rail from the fence that kep' cattle out of the spring. The woman hollered and grabbed at number two again, and while he was shaking her loose, number one ups and hits him over the head with his rail, and he dropped like a ox. Them hill folks has got hard heads, but it seemed to me I could hear that feller's skull bust. Leastways, he never moved again. The woman backed off, clamping her head betwixt her hands; and the feller watched him awhile, then throwed away his rail.

"Well, sir, you could of knocked me down with a straw. There I was, watching murder, skeered to move, and no sign of sheriff and Tim. I've got along fine without no law officers, but I sho' needed one then." Ek stopped, with consummate art, and gazed about on his hearers. Their eyes were enraptured on his face, the hot black gaze of the stranger seemed like a blade spitting him against the wall, like a pinned moth. The train whistled again, unheard.

"Go on, go on," breathed Gibson.

He drew his gaze from the stranger's by an effort of will, and found that the pleasant May morning was suddenly chill. For some reason he did not want to continue.

"Well, sir, I didn't know whether the feller would finish his job right then or not; seemed like he didn't know himself. And all the time the woman was like she was took by a spell. Finally he walked over and picked the unconscious feller up, and carried him about fifteen foot down the gully, then dumped him like a sack of meal into one of them narrow sink holes. And all the time the woman was watching him like she was turned to stone." The train whistled again and the locomotive came in sight, but not one turned his eyes from the narrator's face.

"Seemed like he had decided what to do now. He run back to'rds where the woman was, and I thinks, my God, he's going to kill her, too. But no, he's just after his box. He grabs it up and come back to where he had throwed the other feller. Well, sir, if I could have been cur'ous over anything right then, I would have been cur'ous over what he was a-doing now. But as it was, I was past thinking: jest goggle-eyed, like a fish when you jerk him out the water.

"And all the time this feller is fiddling with his box, standing on the edge of that sink hole. All on a sudden he helt it out from him, shaking it over the hole. Finally something all knotted and shiny like a big watch chain fell out of it and dropped, shining and twisting, into the place where the other feller was.

"Then I knowed who'd killed them rattlers."

"My God," said someone.

"Yes, sir. They'd planned to fix that there snake where number two'd stumble on it when he come in, only he come too soon for 'em."

"My God!" repeated the voice, then the one called Lafe screamed:

"Look out!"

A pistol said whow, the sound slammed against the front of the store and roared across the porch. Ek rolled from his chair and thumped on the floor, tried to rise, and fell again. Lafe sprang erect, but the others sat in reft and silent amaze, watching the stranger leaping down the path toward the track and the passing train; saw him recklessly grasp a car ladder and,

shaving death by inches, scramble aboard.

* *

Later, when the doctor had ridden ten miles, dressed Ek's shoulder, cursed him for a fool, and gone, the four of them took him to task.

"Well, Ek, I guess you learnt your lesson. You'll know better than tell the truth again."

"Ain't it the beatingest thing? Here's a man lied his way through life fer forty years and never got a scratch, then sets out to tell the truth fer once in his life, and gets shot."

"But what was your point," Will Gibson reiterated, "in telling your fool yarn right in front of the feller that did it? Didn't you know him again?"

Ek turned his fever exasperated face to them. "I tell you that it was all a lie, ever' last word of it. I wasn't nowhere near Mitchell yest'day."

They shook their heads at his obstinacy; then Gibson, seeing that they were increasing the patient's fever, drove them out. The last to go, he turned at the door for a parting shot.

"I don't know whether you were lying, or were telling the truth, but either way, you must get a whole lot of satisfaction out of this. If you were lying, you ought to be shot for telling one so prob'le that it reely happened somewhere; and if you were telling the truth, you ought to be shot for having no better sense than to blab it out in front of the man that done the killing. Either way, if you ain't learnt a lesson, I have. And this is, don't talk at all lessen you have to, and when you got to talk, tell the truth."

"Aw, get out of here," snarled Ek. And convicted of both truthfulness and stupidity, he turned his face bitterly to the wall, knowing that his veracity as a liar was gone forever.

NEXT MONTH—

THE RHINE IS A RIVER OF EPICS. HOW

COULD THE SAINT HAVE TRAVELED IT

WITHOUT ADDING AN INCIDENT TO HIS OWN SAGA?

THE RHINE MAIDEN

A SAINT STORY by LESLIE CHARTERIS

—in THE SAINT MYSTERY MAGAZINE

the sheriff of gullmore

by . . . Melville D. Post

"It is hard luck, Colonel," said the broker, "but you are not the only one skinned in the deal; the best of them caught it to-day. By Jupiter! the pit was like Dante's Inferno!"

"Yes, it's gone, I reckon," muttered the Colonel, shutting his teeth down tight on his cigar; "I guess the devil wins every two out of three."

"Well," said the broker, turning to his desk, "it is the fortune of war."

"No, young man," growled the Colonel, "it is the blasted misfortune of peace. I have never had any trouble with the fortune of war. I could stand on an ace high and win with war. It is peace that queers me. Here in the fag-end of the nineteenth century, I, Colonel Moseby Allen, sheriff of Gullmore County, West Virginia, go up against another man's game,—yes, and go up in the daytime. Say, young man, it feels queer at the mellow age of forty-nine, after you have been in the legislature of a great common-

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Randolph Mason was the first fictional criminal lawyer to place his very considerable talents at the service of elements interested mostly in outwitting the law. He was not the first member of his profession to do so in real life, but it was the first time that the possibility of this happening was conceded in popular fiction of the day. To the dismay of many, realism had come to the field. Things were never quite the same.

From: Melville Davisson Post's THE STRANGE SCHEMES OF RANDOLPH MASON
1896, New York
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wealth, and at the very expiration of your term as sheriff of the whitest and the freest county in West Virginia,—I say it feels queer, after all those high honors, to be suddenly reminded that you need to be accompanied by a business chaperon."

The Colonel stood perfectly erect and delivered his oration with the fluency and the abandon of a southern orator. When he had finished, he bowed low to the broker, pulled his big slouch hat down on his forehead, and stalked out of the office and down the steps to the street.

Colonel Moseby Allen was built on the decided lines of a southern mountaineer. He was big and broad-shouldered, but he was not well proportioned. His body was short and heavy, while his legs were long. His eyes were deep-set and shone like little brown beads. On the whole, his face indicated cunning, bluster, and rashness. The ward politician would have recognized him among a thousand as a kindred spirit, and the professional gambler would not have felt so sure of himself with such a face across the table from him.

When the Colonel stepped out on the pavement, he stopped, thrust his hands into his pockets, and looked up and down Wall Street; then he jerked the cigar out of his mouth, threw it into the gutter, and began to deliver himself of a philippic upon the negative merits of brokers in general, and his broker in particular. The Virginian possessed a vocabulary of smooth billingsgate that in vividness and diversity approached the sublime. When he had consigned some seven generations of his broker's ancestry to divers minutely described localities in perdition, he began to warm to his work, and his artistic profanity rolled forth in startling periods.

The passers-by stopped and looked on in surprise and wonder. For a moment they were half convinced that the man was a religious fanatic, his eloquent, almost poetic, tirade was so thoroughly filled with holy names. The effect of the growing audience inspired the speaker. He raised his voice and began to emphasize with sweeping gestures. He had now finished with the broker's ancestry and was plunging with a rush of gorgeous pyrotechnics into the certain future of the broker himself, when a police officer pushed through the crowd and caught the irate Virginian by the shoulder.

Colonel Allen paused and looked down at the officer.

"You," he said, calmly, "I opine are a minion of the law; a hireling of the municipal authorities."

"See here," said the officer, "you are not allowed to preach on the street. You will have to come with me to the station-house."

The Colonel bowed suavely. "Sir," he said, "I, Colonel Moseby Allen, sheriff of Gullmore County in the Mountain State of West Vir-

ginia, am a respecter of the law, even in the body of its petty henchmen, and if the ordinances of this God-forsaken Gomorrah are such that a free-born American citizen, twenty-one years old and white, is not permitted the inalienable privilege of expressing his opinion without let or hindrance, then I am quite content to accompany you to the confines of your accursed jailhouse."

Allen turned round and started down the street with the officer. He walked a little in advance, and continued to curse glibly in a low monotone. When they were half way to the corner below, a little man slipped out of the crowd and hurried up to the policeman. "Mike," he whispered, putting his hand under the officer's, "here is five for you. Turn him over to me."

The officer closed his hand like a trap, stepped quickly forward, and touched his prisoner on the shoulder.

As the Virginian turned, the officer said in a loud voice: "Mr. Parks, here, says that he knows you, and that you are all right, so I'll let you go this time." Then, before any reply could be made, he vanished around the corner.

Colonel Allen regarded his deliverer with the air of a world-worn cynic. "Well," he said, "one is rarely delivered from the spoiler by the hand of his friend, and I cannot now recall ever having had you for an enemy. May I inquire what motive prompts this gracious courtesy?"

"Don't speak so loud," said Parks, stepping up close to the man. "I happen to know something about your loss, Colonel Allen, and perhaps also a way to regain it. Will you come with me?"

The Virginian whistled softly. "Yes," he said.

"This is a fine hotel," observed Colonel Allen, beginning to mellow under the mystic spell of a five-course dinner and a quart of Cliquot. "Devilish fine hotel, Mr. Parks. All the divers moneys which I in my official capacity have collected in taxes from the fertile county of Gullmore, would scarcely pay for the rich embellishment of the barber shop of this magnificent edifice."

"Well, Colonel," said the bald Parks, with a sad smile, "that would depend upon the amount of the revenues of your county. I presume that they are large, and consequently the office of sheriff a good one."

"Yes, sir," answered the Virginian, "it is generally considered desirable from the standpoint of prominence. The climate of Gullmore is salubrious. Its pasture lands are fertile, and its citizens cultured and refined to a degree unusual even in the ancient and aristocratic counties of the Old Dominion. And, sir,"—here the Colonel drew himself up proudly, and thrust his hand

into the breast of his coat,—"I am proud, sir,—proud to declare that from time to time the good citizens of Gullmore, by means of their suffrage, and with large and comfortable majorities, have proclaimed me their favorite son and competent official. Six years ago I was in the legislature at Charleston as the trusted representative of this grand old county of Gullmore; and four years ago, after the fiercest and most bitterly contested political conflict of all the history of the South, I was elected to that most important and honorable office of sheriff,—to the lasting glory of my public fame, and the great gratification of the commonwealth."

"That gratification is now four years old?" mused Parks.

Colonel Moseby Allen darted a swift, suspicious glance at his companion, but in a moment it was gone, and he had dropped back into his grandiloquent discourse. "Yes, sir, the banner county of West Virginia, deserting her ancient and sacred traditions, and forgetting for the time the imperishable precepts of her patriotic fathers, has gone over to affiliate with the ungodly. We were beaten, sir,—beaten in this last engagement,—horse, foot, and dragoons,—beaten by a set of carpet-baggers,—a set of unregenerate political tricksters of such diabolical cunning that nothing but the gates of hell could have prevailed against them. Now, sir, now,—and I say it mournfully, there is nothing left to us in the county of Gullmore, save only honor."

"Honor," sneered Parks, "an imaginary rope to hold fools with! It won't fill a hungry stomach, or satisfy a delinquent account." The little clerk spoke the latter part of his sentence slowly and deliberately.

Again the suspicious expression passed over the face of Colonel Allen, leaving traces of fear and anxiety in its wake. His eyes, naturally a little crossed, drew in toward his nose, and the muscles around his mouth grew hard. For a moment he was silent, looking down into his glass; then, with an effort, he went on: "Yes, the whole shooting-match is in the hands of the Philistines. From the members of the County Court up to the important and responsible position which I have filled for the last four years, and when my accounts are finally wound up, I——"

"Your accounts," murmured Parks, "when they are finally wound up, what then?"

Every trace of color vanished from the Virginian's face, his heavy jaws trembled, and he caught hold of the arms of the chair to steady himself.

Parks did not look up. He seemed deeply absorbed in studying the bottom of his glass. For a moment Colonel Moseby Allen had been caught off guard, but it was only for a moment. He straightened up and underwent a complete trans-

formation. Then, bending forward, he said, speaking low and distinctly: "Look here, my friend, you are the best guesser this side of hell. Now, if you can pick a winning horse we will divide the pool."

The two men were at a table in a corner of the Hoffman café, and, as it chanced, alone in the room. Parks glanced around quickly, then he leaned over and said: "That depends on just one thing, Colonel."

"Turn up the cards," growled the Virginian, shutting his teeth down tight on his lip.

"Well," said Parks, "you must promise to stick to your rôle to the end, if you commence with the play."

The southerner leaned back in his chair and stroked his chin thoughtfully. Finally he dropped his hand and looked up. "All right," he muttered; "I'll stand by the deal; throw out the cards."

Parks moved his chair nearer to the table and leaned over on his elbow. "Colonel," he said, "there is only one living man who can set up a successful counter-plot against fate, that is dead certain to win, and that man is here in New York to-day. He is a great lawyer, and besides being that, he is the greatest plotter since the days of Napoleon. Not one of his clients ever saw the inside of a prison. He can show men how to commit crimes in such a way that the law cannot touch them. No matter how desperate the position may be, he can always show the man who is in it a way by which he can get out. There is no case so hopeless that he cannot manage it. If money is needed, he can show you how to get it—a plain, practical way, by which you can get what you need and as much as you need. He has a great mind, but he is strangely queer and erratic, and must be approached with extreme care, and only in a certain way. This man," continued the little clerk, lowering his voice, "is named Randolph Mason. You must go to him and explain the whole matter, and you must do it just in the way I tell you."

Again the Virginian whistled softly. "My friend," he said, "there is a little too much mystery about this matter. I am not afraid of you, because you are a rascal; no one ever had a face like you that was not a rascal. You will stick to me because you are out for the stuff, and there is no possible way to make a dollar by throwing the game. I am not afraid of any living man, if I have an opportunity to see his face before the bluff is made. You are all right; your game is to use me in making some haul that is a little too high for yourself. That is what you have been working up to, and you are a smooth operator, my friend. A greenhorn would have concluded long ago that you were a detective, but I knew a blamed sight better than that the moment you made your first lead. In the first place, you are too sharp to

waste your time with any such bosh, and in the second place, it takes cash to buy detectives, and there is nobody following me with cash. Gullmore county has no kick coming to it until my final settlements are made, and there is no man treading shoe leather that knows anything about the condition of my official business except myself, and perhaps also that shrewd and mysterious guesser—yourself. So, you see, I am not standing on ceremonies with you. But here, young man, comes in a dark horse, and you want me to bet on him blindfolded. Those are not the methods of Moseby Allen. I must be let in a little deeper on this thing."

"All I want you to do," said Parks, putting his hand confidentially on the Virginian's arm, "is simply to go and see Randolph Mason, and approach him in the way I tell you, and when you have done that, I will wager that you stay and explain everything to him."

Colonel Allen leaned back in his chair and thrust his hands into his pockets. "Why should I do that?" he said curtly.

"Well," murmured the little man mournfully, "one's bondsmen are entitled to some consideration; and then, there is the penitentiary. Courts have a way of sending men there for embezzlement."

"You are correct," said Allen, quietly, "and I have not time to go."

"At any rate," continued Parks, "there can be no possible danger to you. You are taking no chances. Mr. Mason is a member of the New York bar, and anything you may tell him he dare not reveal. The law would not permit him to do so if he desired. The whole matter would be kept as thoroughly inviolate as though it were made in the confessional. Your objections are all idle. You are a man in a desperate position. You are up to your waist in the quicksand, now, and, at the end of the year, it is bound to close over your head. It is folly to look up at the sky and attempt to ignore this fact. I offer to help you—not from any goodness of heart, understand, but because we can both make a stake in this thing. I need money, and you must have money, —that is the whole thing in a nutshell. Now," said Parks, rising from his chair, "what are you going to do?"

"Well," said the Virginian, drawing up his long legs and spreading out his fat hands on the table, "Colonel Moseby Allen, of the county of Gullmore, will take five cards, if you please."

"This must be the place," muttered the Virginian, stopping under the electric light and looking up at the big house on the avenue. "That fellow said I would know the place by the copper-studded door, and there it is, as certain as there are back taxes in Gullmore."

With that, Colonel Moseby Allen walked up the granite steps and began to grope about in the dark doorway for the electric bell. He could find no trace of this indispensable convenience, and was beginning to lapse into a flow of half-suppressed curses, when he noticed for the first time an ancient silver knocker fastened to the middle of the door. He seized it and banged it vigorously. The Virginian stood in the dark and waited. Finally he concluded that the noise had not been heard, and was about to repeat the signal when the door was flung suddenly open, and a tall man holding a candle in his hand loomed up in the door-way.

"I am looking," stammered the southerner, "for one Randolph Mason, an attorney-at-law."

"I am Randolph Mason," said the man, thrusting the silver candlestick out before him. "Who are you, sir?"

"My name is Allen," answered the southerner, "Moseby Allen, of Gullmore county, West Virginia."

"A Virginian," said Mason, "what evil circumstance brings you here?"

Then Allen remembered the instructions which Parks had given him so minutely. He took off his hat and passed his hand across his forehead. "Well," he said, "I suppose the same thing that brings the others. We get in and plunge along just as far as we can. Then Fate shuts down the lid of her trap, and we have either to drop off the bridge or come here."

"Come in," said Mason. Then he turned abruptly and walked down the hall-way. The southerner followed, impressed by this man's individuality. Allen had pushed his way through life with bluff and bluster, and like that one in the scriptural writings, "neither feared God nor regarded man." His unlimited assurance had never failed him before any of high or low degree, and to be impressed with the power of any man was to him strange and uncomfortable.

Mason turned into his library and placed the candlestick on a table in the centre of the floor. Then he drew up two chairs and sat down in one of them motioning Allen to the other on the opposite side of the table. The room was long and empty, except for the rows of heavy book-cases standing back in the darkness. The floor was bare, and there was no furniture of any kind whatever, except the great table and the ancient high-back chairs. There was no light but the candle standing high in its silver candlestick.

"Sir," said Mason, when the Virginian had seated himself, "which do you seek to evade, punishment or dishonor?"

The Virginian turned round, put his elbows on the table, and looked squarely across at his questioner. "I am not fool enough to care for

the bark," he answered, "provided the dog's teeth are muzzled."

"It is well," said Mason, slowly, "there is often difficulty in dealing with double problems, where both disgrace and punishment are sought to be evaded. Where there is but one difficulty to face, it can usually be handled with ease. What others are involved in your matter?"

"No others," answered the Virginian; "I am seeking only to save myself."

"From the law only," continued Mason, "or does private vengeance join with it?"

"From the law only," answered Allen.

"Let me hear it all," said Mason.

"Well," said the Virginian, shifting uneasily in his chair, "my affairs are in a very bad way, and every attempt that I have made to remedy them has resulted only in disaster. I am walking, with my hands tied, straight into the penitentiary, unless some miracle can be performed in my favor. Everything has gone dead against me from my first fool move. Four years ago I was elected sheriff of Gullmore county in the State of West Virginia. I was of course required by law to give a large bond. This I had much difficulty in doing, for the reason that I have no estate whatever. Finally I induced my brother and my father, who is a very old man, to mortgage their property and thereby secured the requisite bond. I entered upon the duties of my office, and assumed entire control of the revenues of the county. For a time I managed them carefully and kept my private business apart from that of the county. But I had never been accustomed to strict business methods, and I soon found it most difficult to confine myself to them. Little by little I began to lapse into my old habit of carelessness. I neglected to keep up the settlements, and permitted the official business to become intermixed with my private accounts. The result was that I awoke one morning to find that I owed the county of Gullmore ten thousand dollars. I began at once to calculate the possibility of my being able to meet this deficit before the expiration of my term of office, and soon found that by no possible means would I be able to raise this amount out of the remaining fees. My gambling instincts at once asserted themselves. I took five thousand dollars, went to Lexington, and began to play the races in a vain, reckless hope that I might win enough to square my accounts. I lost from the very start. I came back to my county and went on as before, hoping against hope that something would turn up and let me out. Of course this was the dream of an idiot, and when the opposition won at the last election, and a new sheriff was installed, and I was left but a few months within which to close up my accounts, the end which I had refused to think of arose and stared me in the face.

I was now at the end of my tether, and there was nothing there but a tomb. And even that way was not open. If I should escape the penitentiary by flight or by suicide, I would still leave my brother and my aged father to bear the entire burden of my defalcations; and when they, as my bondsmen, had paid the sum to the county, they would all be paupers."

The man paused and mopped the perspiration from his face. He was now terribly in earnest, and seemed to be realizing the gravity and the hopelessness of his crime. All his bluster and grandiloquent airs had vanished.

"Wreckless and unscrupulous as I am," he went on, "I cannot bear to think of my brother's family beggars because of my wrong, or my father in his extreme old age turned out from under his own roof and driven into the poor-house, and yet it must come as certainly as the sun will rise tomorrow."

The man's voice trembled now, and the flabby muscles of his face quivered.

"In despair, I gathered up all the funds of the county remaining in my hands and hurried to this city. Here I went to the most reliable broker I could find and through him plunged into speculation. But all the devils in hell seemed to be fighting for my ruin. I was caught in that dread and unexpected crash of yesterday and lost everything. Strange to say, when I realized that my ruin was now complete, I felt a kind of exhilaration,—such, I presume, as is said to come to men when they are about to be executed. Standing in the very gaping jaws of ruin, I have to-day been facetious, even merry. Now, in the full glare of this horrible matter, I scarcely remember what I have been doing, or how I came to be here, except that this morning in Wall Street I heard some one speak of your ability, and I hunted up your address and came without any well defined plan, and, if you will pardon me, I will add that it was also without any hope."

The man stopped and seemed to settle back in his chair in a great heap.

Randolph Mason arose and stood looking down at the Virginian.

"Sir," said Mason, "none are ever utterly lost but the weak. Answer my question."

The Virginian pulled himself together and looked up.

"Is there any large fund," continued Mason, "in the hands of the officers of your county?"

"My successor," said Allen, "has just collected the amount of a levy ordered by the county court for the purpose of paying the remainder due on the court-house. He now has that fund in his hands."

"When was the building erected?" said Mason.

"It was built during the last year of my term of office, and paid for in part out of levies ordered while

I was active sheriff. When my successor came in there still remained due the contractors on the work some thirty thousand dollars. A levy was ordered by the court shortly before my term expired, but the collection of this levy fell to the coming officer, so this money is not in my hands, although all the business up to this time has been managed by me, and the other payments on the building made from time to time out of moneys in my hands, and I have been the chief manager of the entire work and know more about it than any one else. The new sheriff came into my office a few days ago to inquire how he was to dispose of this money."

Mason sat down abruptly. "Sir," he said almost bitterly, "there is not enough difficulty in your matter to bother the cheapest intriguer in Kings county. I had hoped that yours was a problem of some gravity."

"I see," said the Virginian sarcastically, "I am to rob the sheriff of this money in such a manner that it won't be known who received it, and square my accounts. That would be very easy indeed. I would have only to kill three men and break a bank. Yes, that would be very easy. You might as well tell me to have blue eyes."

"Sir," said Randolph Mason, slowly, "you are the worst prophet unhung."

"Well," continued the man, "there can be no other way. If it were turned over to me in my official capacity what good would it do? My bondsmen would be responsible for it. I would then have it to account for, and what difference, in God's name, can it make whether I am sent to the penitentiary for stealing money which I have already used, or for stealing this money? It all belongs to the county. It is two times six one way, and six times two the other way."

"Sir," said Mason, "I retract my former statement in regard to your strong point. Let me insist that you devote your time to prophecy. Your reasoning is atrocious."

"I am wasting my time here," muttered the Virginian, "there is no way out of it."

Randolph Mason turned upon the man. "Are you afraid of courts?" he growled.

"No," said the southerner, "I am afraid of nothing but the penitentiary."

"Then," said Mason, leaning over on the table, "listen to me, and you will never see the shadow of it."

"I suppose you are right about that," said Jacob Wade, the newly elected sheriff of Gullmore county, as he and Colonel Moseby Allen sat in the office of that shrewd and courteous official. "I suppose it makes no difference which one of us takes this money and pays the contractors,—we are both under good bonds, you know."

"Certainly, Wade, certainly," put

in the Colonel, "your bond is as good as they can be made in Gullmore county, and I mean no disrespect to the Omnipotent Ruler of the Universe when I assert that the whole kingdom of heaven could not give a better bond than I have. You are right, Wade; you are always right; you are away ahead of the ringleaders of your party. I don't mind if I do say so. Of course, I am on the other side, but it was miraculous, I tell you, the way you swung your forces into line in the last election. By all the limping gods of the calendar, we could not touch you!"

Colonel Moseby Allen leaned over and patted his companion on the shoulder. "You are a sly dog, Wade," he continued. "If it had not been for you we would have beaten the bluebells of Scotland out of the soft-headed farmers who were trying to run your party. I told the boys you would pull the whole ticket over with you, but they didn't believe me. Next time they will have more regard for the opinion of Moseby Allen of Gullmore." The Colonel burst out into a great roar of laughter, and brought his fat hand down heavily on his knee.

Jacob Wade, the new sheriff, was a cadaverous-looking countryman, with a face that indicated honesty and egotism. He had come up from a farm, and had but little knowledge of business methods in general, and no idea of how the duties of his office should be properly performed. He puffed up visibly under the bald flattery of Allen, and took it all in like a sponge.

"Well," said Wade, "I suppose the boys did sort of expect me to help them over, and I guess I did. I have been getting ready to run for a long time, and I aint been doing no fool things. When the Farmers Alliance people was organizing, I just stayed close home and sawed wood, and when the county was all stirred up about that there dog tax, I kept my mouth shut, and never said nothing."

"That's what you did, Wade," continued the Colonel, rubbing his hands; "you are too smooth to get yourself mixed up with a lot of new-fangled notions that would brand you all over the whole county as a crank. What a man wants in order to run for the office of sheriff is a reputation for being a square, solid, substantial business man, and that is what you had, Wade, and besides that you were a smooth, shrewd, far-sighted, machine politician."

Jacob Wade flushed and grew pompous under this eloquent recital of his alleged virtues. Allen was handling his man with skill. He was a natural judge of men, and possessed in no little degree the rare ability of knowing how to approach the individual in order to gain his confidence and good-will.

"No," he went on, "I am not partisan enough to prevent me from appreciating a good clear-headed politician, no matter what his party

affiliations may be. I am as firm and true to my principles as any of those high up in the affairs of state. I have been honored by my party time and again in the history of this commonwealth, and have defended and supported her policies on the stump, and in the halls of legislation, and I know a smooth man when I see him, and I honor him, and stick to him out of pure love for his intelligence and genius."

The Colonel arose. He now felt that his man was in the proper humor to give ready assent to the proposition which he had made, and he turned back to it with careless indifference.

"Now, Jacob," he said lowering his voice, "this is not all talk. You are a new officer, and I am an old one. I am familiar with all the routine business of the sheriffalty, and I am ready and willing and anxious to give all the information that can be of any benefit to you, and to do any and everything in my power to make your term of office as pleasant and profitable as it can be made. I am wholly and utterly at your service, and want you to feel that you are more than welcome to command me in any manner you see fit. By the way, here is this matter that we were just discussing. I am perfectly familiar with all that business. I looked after the building for the county, collected all the previous levies, and know all about the contracts with the builders—just what is due each one and just how the settlements are to be made,—and I am willing to take charge of this fund and settle the thing up. I suppose legally it is my duty to attend to this work, as it is in the nature of unfinished business of my term, but I could have shifted the whole thing over on you and gotten out of the trouble of making the final settlements with the contractors. The levy was ordered during my term, but has been collected by you, and on that ground I could have washed my hands of the troublesome matter if I had been disposed to be ugly. But I am not that kind of a man, Wade; I am willing to shoulder my lawful duties, and wind this thing up and leave your office clear and free from any old matters."

Jacob Wade, sheriff of Gullmore county, was now thoroughly convinced of two things. First, that he himself was a shrewd politician, with an intellect of almost colossal proportions, and second, that Colonel Moseby Allen was a great and good man, who was offering to do him a service out of sheer kindness of heart.

He arose and seized Allen's hand. "I am obliged to you, Colonel, greatly obliged to you," he said; "I don't know much about these matters yet, and it will save me a deal of trouble if you will allow me to turn this thing over to you, and let you settle it up. I reckon from the standpoint of law it is a part of your old business as sheriff."

"Yes," answered Allen, smiling broadly, "I reckon it is, and I reckon I ought n't to shirk it."

"All right," said Wade, turning to leave the office, "I'll just hand the whole thing over to you in the morning." Then he went out.

The ex-sheriff closed the door, sat down in his chair, and put his feet on the table. "Well, Moseby, my boy," he said, "that was dead easy. The Honorable Jacob Wade is certainly the most irresponsible idiot west of the Alleghany mountains. He ought to have a committee,—yes, he ought to have two committees, one to run him, and one to run his business." Then he rubbed his hands gleefully. "It is working like a greased clock," he chuckled, "and by the grace of God and the Continental Congress, when this funeral procession does finally start, it won't be Colonel Moseby Allen of the county of Gullmore who will occupy the hearse."

The inhabitants of the city could never imagine the vast interest aroused in the county of Gullmore by the trial of Colonel Moseby Allen for embezzlement. In all their quiet lives the good citizens had not been treated to such a sweeping tidal wave of excitement. The annual visits of the "greatest show on earth" were scarcely able to fan the interests of the countrymen into such a flame. The news of Allen's arrest had spread through the country like wildfire. Men had talked of nothing else from the moment this startling information had come to their ears. The crowds on Saturday afternoons at the country store had constituted themselves courts of first and last resort, and had passed on the matter of the ex-sheriff's guilt at great length and with great show of learning. The village blacksmith had delivered ponderous opinions while he shod the traveller's horse; and the ubiquitous justice of the peace had demonstrated time and again with huge solemnity that Moseby Allen was a great criminal, and by no possible means could be saved from conviction. It was the general belief that the ex-sheriff would not stand trial; that he would by some means escape from the jail where he was confined. So firm-rooted had this conviction become that the great crowd gathered in the little county seat on the day fixed for the trial were considerably astonished when they saw the ex-sheriff sitting in the dock. In the evening after the first day of the trial, in which certain wholly unexpected things had come to pass, the crowd gathered on the porch of the country hotel were fairly revelling in the huge sensation.

Duncan Hatfield, a long ungainly mountaineer, wearing a red hunting-shirt and a pair of blue jeans trousers, was evidently the Sir-Oracle of the occasion.

"I tell you, boys," he was saying,

"old Moseby aint got no more show than a calliker apron in a brush fire. Why he jest laid down and give up; jest naturally lopped his ears and give up like a whipped dog."

"Yes," put in an old farmer who was standing a little back in the crowd, "I reckon nobody calkerlated on jest sich a fizzle."

"When he come into court this mornin'," continued the Oracle, "with that there young lawyer man Edwards, I poked Lum Bozier in the side, and told him to keep his eye skinned, and he would see the fur fly, because I knowed that Sam Lynch, the prosecutin' attorney, allowed to go fer old Moseby, and Sam is a fire-eater, so he is, and he aint afraid of nuthin that walks on legs. But, Jerusalem! it war the tamest show that ever come to this yer town. Edwards jest sot down and lopped over like a weed, and Sam he begun, and he showed up how old Moseby had planned this here thing, and how he had lied to Jake Wade all the way through, and jest how he got that there money, and what an everlasting old rascal he was, and there sot Edwards, and he never asked no questions, and he never paid no attention to nuthin."

"Did n't the lawyer feller do nuthin at all, Dunk?" enquired one of the audience, who had evidently suffered the great misfortune of being absent from the trial.

"No," answered the Oracle, with a bovine sneer, "he never did nothin till late this evenin. Then he untangled his legs and got up and said somethin to the jedge about havin to let old Moseby Allen go, cause what he had done wasn't no crime.

"Then you ought to a heard Sam. He jest naturally took the roof off; he sailed into old Moseby. He called him nine different kinds of horse-thieves, and when he got through, I could see old Ampe Props noddin his head back thar in the jury-box, and then I knowed that it were all up with Colonel Moseby Allen, cause that jury will go the way old Ampe goes, jest like a pack of sheep."

"I reckon Moseby's lawyer were skeered out," suggested Pooley Hornick, the blacksmith.

"I reckon he war," continued the Oracle, "cause when Sam sot down, he got up, and he said to the jedge that he didn't want to do no argufying, but he had a little paper that would show why the jedge would have to let old Moseby go free, and then he asked Sam if he wanted to see it, and Sam he said no, he cared nuthin for his little paper. Then the feller went over and give the little paper to the jedge, and the jedge he took it and he said he would decide in the mornin'."

"You don't reckon," said the farmer, "that the jedge will give the old colonel any show, do you?"

"Billdad Solsberry," said the Oracle, with a grave judicial air, as though to settle the matter be-

yond question, "you are a plumb fool. If the angel Gabriel war to drop down into Gullmore county, he couldn't keep old Moseby Allen from goin' to the penitentiary."

Thus the good citizens sat in judgment, and foretold the doom of their fellow.

On Monday night, the eleventh day of May, in the thirty-third year of the State of West Virginia, the judge of the criminal court of Gullmore county, and the judge of the circuit court of Gullmore county were to meet together for the purpose of deciding two matters,—one relating to the trial of Moseby Allen, the retiring sheriff, for embezzling funds of the county, amounting to thirty thousand dollars, and the other, an action pending in the circuit court, wherein the State of West Virginia, at the relation of Jacob Wade, was seeking to recover this sum from the bondsmen of Allen. In neither of the two cases was there any serious doubt as to the facts. It seemed that it was customary for the retiring sheriff to retain an office in the court building after the installation of his successor, and continue to attend to the unfinished business of the county until all his settlements had been made, and until all the matters relating to his term of office had been finally wound up and administered.

In accordance with this custom, Moseby Allen, after the expiration of his term, had continued in his office in a quasi-official capacity, in order to collect back taxes and settle up all matters carried over from his regular term.

It appeared that during Allen's term of office the county had built a court-house, and had ordered certain levies for the purpose of raising the necessary funds. The first of the levies had been collected by Allen, and paid over by him to the contractors, as directed by the county court. The remaining levies had not been collected during his term, but had been collected by the new sheriff immediately after his installation. This money, amounting to some thirty thousand dollars, had been turned over to Allen upon his claim that it grew out of the unfinished affairs of his term, and that, therefore, he was entitled to its custody. He had said to the new sheriff that the levy upon which it had been raised was ordered during his term, and the work for which it was to be paid all performed, and the bonds of the county issued, while he was active sheriff, and that he believed it was a part of the matters which were involved in his final settlements. Jacob Wade, then sheriff, believing that Allen was in fact the proper person to rightly administer this fund, and knowing that his bond to the county was good and would cover all his official affairs, had turned the entire fund over to him, and paid no further attention to the matter.

It appeared that, at the end of the year, Moseby Allen had made all of his proper and legitimate settlements fully and satisfactorily, and had accounted to the proper authorities for every dollar that had been collected by him during his term of office, but had refused and neglected to account for the money which he had received from Wade. When approached upon the subject, he had said plainly that he had used this money in unfortunate speculations and could not return it. The man had made no effort to check the storm of indignation that burst upon him; he firmly refused to discuss the matter, or to give any information in regard to it. When arrested, he had expressed no surprise, and had gone to the jail with the officer. At the trial, his attorney had simply waited until the evidence had been introduced, and had then arisen and moved the court to direct a verdict of not guilty, on the ground that Allen, upon the facts shown, had committed no crime punishable under the statutes of West Virginia.

The court had been strongly disposed to over-rule this motion without stopping to consider it, but the attorney had insisted that a memorandum which he handed up would sustain his position, and that without mature consideration the judge ought not to force him into the superior court, whereupon his Honor, Ephraim Haines, had taken the matter under advisement until morning.

In the circuit court the question had been raised that Allen's bond covered only those matters which arose by virtue of his office, and that this fund was not properly included. Whereupon the careful judge of that court had adjourned to consider.

It was almost nine o'clock when the Honorable Ephraim Haines walked into the library to consult with his colleague of the civil court. He found that methodical jurist seated before a pile of reports, with his spectacles far out on the end of his nose,—an indication, as the said Haines well knew, that the said jurist had arrived at a decision, and was now carefully turning it over in his mind in order to be certain that it was in spirit and truth the very law of the land.

"Well, Judge," said Haines, "have you flipped the penny on it, and if so, who wins?"

The man addressed looked up from his book and removed his spectacles. He was an angular man, with a grave analytical face.

"It is not a question of who wins, Haines," he answered; "it is a question of law. I was fairly satisfied when the objection was first made, but I wanted to be certain before I rendered my decision. I have gone over the authorities, and there is no question about the matter. The bondsmen of Allen are not liable in this action."

"They are not!" said Haines, dropping his long body down into a chair. "It is public money, and the object of the bond is certainly to cover any defalcations."

"This bond," continued the circuit judge, "provides for the faithful discharge, according to law, of the duties of the office of sheriff during his continuance in said office. Moseby Allen ceased to be sheriff of this county the day his successor was installed, and on that day this bond ceased to cover his acts. This money was handed over by the lawful sheriff to a man who was not then an officer of this county. Moseby Allen had no legal right to the custody of this money. His duties as sheriff had ceased, his official acts had all determined, and there was no possible way whereby he could then perform an official act that would render his bondsmen liable. The action pending must be dismissed. The present sheriff, Wade, is the one responsible to the county for this money. His only recourse is an action of debt, or assumpsit, against Allen individually, and as Allen is notoriously insolvent, Wade and his bondsmen will have to make up this deficit."

"Well," said Haines, "that is hard luck."

"No," answered the judge, "it is not luck at all, it is law. Wade permitted himself to be the dupe of a shrewd knave, and he must bear the consequences."

"You can depend upon it," said the Honorable Ephraim Haines, criminal judge by a political error, "that old Allen won't get off so easy with me. The jury will convict him, and I will land him for the full term."

"I was under the impression," said the circuit judge, gravely, "that a motion had been made in your court to direct an acquittal on the ground that no crime had been committed."

"It was," said Haines, "but of course it was made as a matter of form, and there is nothing in it."

"Have you considered it?"

"What is the use? It is a fool motion."

"Well," continued the judge, "this matter comes up from your court to mine on appeal, and you should be correct in your ruling. What authorities were cited?"

"Here is the memorandum," said the criminal judge, "you can run down the cases if you want to, but I know it is no use. The money belonged to the county and old Allen embezzled it,—that is admitted."

To this the circuit judge did not reply. He took the memorandum which Randolph Mason had prepared for Allen, and which the local attorney had submitted, and turned to the cases of reports behind him. He was a hard-working, conscientious man, and not least among his vexatious cares were the reckless decisions of the Honorable Ephraim Haines.

The learned judge of the criminal

court put his feet on the table and began to whistle. When at length wearied of this intellectual diversion, he concentrated all the energy of his mammoth faculties on the highly cultured pastime of sharpening his penknife on the back of the Code.

At length the judge of the circuit court came back to the table, sat down, and adjusted his spectacles. "Haines," he said slowly, "you will have to sustain that motion."

"What!" cried the Honorable Ephraim, bringing the legs of his chair down on the floor with a bang.

"That motion," continued the judge, "must be sustained. Moseby Allen has committed no crime under the statutes of West Virginia."

"Committed no crime!" almost shouted the criminal jurist, doubling his long legs up under his chair, "why, old Allen admits that he got this money and spent it. He says that he converted it to his own use; that it was not his money; that it belonged to the county. The evidence of the State shows that he cunningly induced Wade to turn this money over to him, saying that his bond was good, and that he was entitled to the custody of the fund. The old rascal secured the possession of this money by trickery, and kept it, and now you say he has committed no crime. How in Satan's name do you figure it out?"

"Haines," said the judge, gravely, "I don't figure it out. The law cannot be figured out. It is certain and exact. It describes perfectly what wrongs are punishable as crimes, and exactly what elements must enter into each wrong in order to make it a crime. All right of discretion is taken from the trial court; the judge must abide by the law, and the law decides matters of this nature in no uncertain terms."

"Surely," interrupted Haines, beginning to appreciate the gravity of the situation, "old Allen can be sent to the penitentiary for this crime. He is a rank, out and out embezzler. He stole this money and converted it to his own use. Are you going to say that the crime of embezzlement is a dead letter?"

"My friend," said the judge, "you forget that there is no equity in the criminal courts. The crime of embezzlement is a pure creature of the statute. Under the old common law there was no such crime. Consequently society had no protection from wrongs of this nature, until this evil grew to such proportions that the law-making power began by statute to define this crime and provide for its punishment. The ancient English statutes were many and varied, and, following in some degree thereafter, each of the United States has its own particular statute, describing this crime as being composed of certain fixed technical elements. This indictment against Moseby Allen is brought under Section 19 of Chapter 145 of the Code of West Virginia, which

provides: 'If any officer, agent, clerk or servant of this State, or of any county, district, school district or municipal corporation thereof, or of any incorporated bank or other corporation, or any officer of public trust in this State, or any agent, clerk or servant of any firm or person, or company or assosciation of persons not incorporated, embezzle or fraudulently convert to his own use, bullion, money, bank notes or other security for money, or any effects or property of another person which shall have come to his possession, or been placed under his care or management, by virtue of his office, place or employment, he shall be guilty of larceny thereof.'

"This is the statute describing the offence sought to be charged. All such statutes must be strictly construed. Applying these requisites of the crime to the case before us, we find that Allen cannot be convicted, for the reason that at the time this money was placed in his hands he was not sheriff of Gullmore county, nor was he in any sense its agent, clerk, or servant. And, second, if he could be said to continue an agent, clerk, or servant of this county, after the expiration of his term, he would continue such agent, clerk, or servant for the purpose only of administering those matters which might be said to lawfully pertain to the unfinished business of his office. This fund was in no wise connected with such unfinished affairs, and by no possible construction could he be said to be an agent, clerk, or servant of this county for the purpose of its distribution or custody. Again, in order to constitute such embezzlement, the money must have come into his possession by virtue of his office. This could not be, for the reason that he held no office. His time had expired; Jacob Wade was sheriff, and the moment Jacob Wade was installed, Allen's official capacity determined, and he became a private citizen, with only the rights and liabilities of such a citizen.

"Nor is he guilty of larceny, for the very evident reason that the proper custodian, Wade, voluntarily placed this money in his hands, and he received it under a *bona fide* color of right."

The Honorable Ephraim Haines arose, and brought his ponderous fist down violently on the table. "By the Eternal!" he said, "this is the cutest trick that has been played in the two Virginias for a century. Moseby Allen has slipped out of the clutches of the law like an eel."

"Ephraim," said the circuit judge, reproachfully, "this is no frivolous matter. Moseby Allen has wrought a great wrong, by which many innocent men will suffer vast injury, perhaps ruin. Such malicious cunning is dangerous to society. Justice cannot reach all wrongs; its hands are tied by the restrictions of the law. Why, under this very statute, one who was *de facto* an officer of the county or State, by inducing

some other officer to place in his hands funds to which he was not legally entitled, could appropriate the funds so received with perfect impunity, and without committing any crime or rendering his bondsmen liable. Thus a clerk of the circuit could use without criminal liability any money, properly belonging to the clerk of the county court, or sheriff, provided he could convince the clerk or sheriff that he was entitled to its custody; and so with any officer of the State or county, and this could be done with perfect ease where the officers were well known to each other and strict business methods were not observed. Hence all the great wrong and injury of embezzlement can be committed, and all the gain and profit of it be secured, without violating the statute or rendering the officer liable to criminal prosecution. It would seem that the rogue must be stupid indeed who could not evade the crime of embezzlement."

The man stopped, removed his spectacles, and closed them up in their case. He was a painstaking, honest servant of the commonwealth, and, like many others of the uncomplaining strong, performed his own duties and those of his careless companion without murmur or comment or hope of reward.

The Honorable Ephraim Haines arose and drew himself up pompously. "I am glad," he said, "that we agree on this matter. I shall sustain this motion."

The circuit judge smiled grimly. "Yes," he said, "it is not reason or justice, but it is the law."

At twelve the following night Colonel Moseby Allen, ex-sheriff of the county of Gullmore, now acquitted of crime by the commonwealth, hurried across the border for the purpose of avoiding certain lawless demonstrations on the part of his countrymen,—and of all his acts of public service, this was the greatest.

BAD NEWS FOR CRIMINALS

Tradition has again been broken by the Philadelphia police department in a move to curb the number of street crimes. Normally police work three "shifts" around the clock —8 a.m. to 4 p.m., 4 p.m. to midnight, midnight to 8 a.m. The shifts are worked in rotation, the men dropping back to the earlier shift each week. Commissioner Albert Brown, increasingly aware of the reality that more crimes are committed in the hours from dusk until midnight, has arranged for a fourth shift which is to work only from 7 p.m. to 3 a.m., on the street, on foot. Normal routines will be followed by the other platoons. When volunteers were called for to walk the streets, permanently, during these hours, many policemen are reported to have responded willingly.

the suitcase

by . . . Pat McMahon

THE PLANE, a silver bird dipping its wings to the far-off dawn, came in low over Jason Lean's farmland. Too low, he remembered thinking, for he'd seen so many hundreds on the airport approach that he almost at times felt he could fly one. Too low, with the rising sun in the pilot's eyes and the double row of power lines crossing the tip of the hill. He shouted something, to be heard only by the field birds and the indifferent cows, then screwed his face in a sort of horror as the great plane touched the unseen wires.

There was a crackle of blue flame, no more than that of a match lit and suddenly dying, but it was enough to spell death to an airliner. The entire hillside seemed to explode as the plane twisted into the ground, boring deep like some hibernating animal, spewing flames that might have told you the animal was a dragon.

Jason Lean watched until the first flash of flame had died, and then began the short trek across the valley to the wreckage on the hillside. Others would have seen the crash too, he knew, and already it

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What would you do if faced by the temptation that was to come to Jason Lean? Who can say? Someone once wrote that there are few people, whatever their station in life or their memories of the days and the years that had gone before, who will not, faced by the need for such a decision, hesitate and half stretch out their hands. . . .

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would be tapping out on the news tickers of the world. How many dead—fifty, sixty? Those big planes carried a lot of people these days. He shook his head sadly at the thought, but did not increase his pace. He already knew he would find nothing alive when he reached the smoldering wreckage.

Now here and there a tree was burning, and there ahead he could see the tail section of the plane itself, a great silver thing that sat silent now as a giant tombstone. Padded seats, so comfortable with their bodies still strapped sitting—grotesque, but all too real. And strewn across the landscape, wreckage, flesh, baggage, mail pouches, fallen trees, dangerously dangling wires. As if a giant hand—a flaming devil's hand—had written its signature on the hillside. All dead, all.

He walked among them, terrified, remembering somewhere deep within the recesses of his mind a time when very young he'd walked through a country graveyard at night. He took in all the details of grief and tragedy, the spilled suitcases, the child's toys, the scorched and splintered packing cases . . . and then his eyes fell on one suitcase, resting apart from the others, its leather hide barely marked by the smoke.

It was a large bag, of pale pebbled pigskin, with two tough straps around it to reinforce the lock. It was the only one he saw that had neither burned nor tumbled open to spread its contents over the landscape. Jason Lean stood for some moments staring at the bag, as if it held some strange sort of fascination for him. Then, in an instant of certainty, he stooped and grasped the plastic handle, lifting the suitcase from the ground. He turned once to look over his shoulder, to make certain that none of the blackened corpses moved in accusation. Then he hurried back down the hillside, through the smoky haze of destruction, carrying his treasure like some traveler only just returned from a world tour. . . .

"A plane crash," Martha said when he returned. "What a terrible thing!"

"Terrible," Jason agreed. He always agreed with his wife. "I was over there, looking at the wreckage. They're all dead." Already, on the distant ridge, they could see men moving like ants. Police, ambulances, morgue wagons, reporters—all converging now on the scene of disaster. Making their way carefully around the fallen wires and the blackened wreckage. Hoping, then feeling hope die as they saw what Jason Lean had seen.

"What's that you've got?" she asked, noticing the suitcase for the first time.

"I found it up by the wreckage. It's not burned or anything. Must have been thrown clear."

"And you took it?" She made

the words into something terrible, and for the first time he realized just what he had done. "You took it? From the dead?"

"I . . . I thought it might have something valuable in it. They're all dead. It belongs to no one." But even as he spoke the words he knew he would never convince her.

"That's looting! It's like robbing graves, but even worse. Jason, you have to take it back this minute, leave it where you found it."

"Don't be silly—how could I do that when the hill's swarming with people?" It was the first time he had ever raised his voice to her, and he regretted it at once. "I'll get rid of it, just as soon as I open it up and look inside."

"Jason, you're not opening that suitcase! I can't imagine anything more horrible than pawing about in the belongings of some poor dead creature who was so much alive just an hour ago."

"But . . . but there might be something valuable inside, Martha. It's an expensive suitcase, you can see that. Suppose it contains fancy clothes, or an expensive camera, or important papers. Or even money!"

"Jason, either you return that suitcase this minute, or you take it out behind the barn and bury it. I'm not going to have it here. I'm not going to have you opening it and going through it. I don't want the man's ghost coming and haunting us for your awful crime!"

He knew it was useless when she got in one of those moods. And yet his will was torn between her commanding words and the questioning suitcase that rested now on the floor between his feet. "Martha . . ."

"Bury it! Get it out of my sight, Jason!"

"All right." He went out with bowed head, carrying the heavy suitcase beyond the faded red barn to the little animal graveyard. While Martha watched from a distance he dug a shallow hole and buried the pigskin bag between the old cow and last year's cat. "All right. It's done."

But as he followed her into the house there was a sort of sadness in his heart. . . .

The following morning a car stopped on the road and a tall young man walked back to the barn where Jason was busy with his daily chores. "Hello there," he called out. "Got a minute?"

Jason set down his milk pails and wiped the sweat from his forehead. "Sure, mister. What can I do for you?"

"We're investigating yesterday's plane crash over on the hill. We thought you might have seen something that could help us." The man had taken out a little notebook. "You're Jason Lean, correct?"

"That's me, and I saw it, all right. Plane came in too low. Hit those power lines. Was just at dawn, and I suppose the sun might

have blinded the pilot for a minute. It hit the lines and that was the end of it."

"Did you go over to see the wreckage?"

"I . . . No, I started to, but then turned back. I was afraid of those fallen power lines."

"Just as well," the investigator said, making a brief note in his book. "You couldn't have done anything. They were all killed instantly."

"Yes. Horrible." Jason turned to stare out across the valley, toward the hillside scar which would take many seasons to heal.

"Thanks for your time," the man said. "I may be back to talk to you again."

"Certainly. Anything I can do . . ."

The man nodded a smile and started back to his car. He hadn't asked about the suitcase, Jason thought. They'd never missed it. Burnt to ashes, they probably supposed.

And that night, in bed next to the cold flesh of his wife, Jason imagined it all again. Opening the suitcase, finding a lifetime's treasure nestled there waiting. What would it be? Money? A woman's wardrobe and jewels? A salesman's sample kit of fine furs? Something for Martha, perhaps. Or himself. Even a fine new suit that could be made to fit him.

The next day, in the late afternoon, while Martha was cleaning in the front of the house, his uncertain footsteps took him once more to the animal graveyard beyond the barn. Perhaps, if he could only dig up the suitcase and look —then bury it again before she ever knew the difference. Yes, that was what he would do. Must do.

He retrieved the old spade from the barn and started to dig. After a moment's work he could feel the familiar leather hide as he scraped the dirt from it.

"Jason!"

"Martha. What are you . . . ?"

"Jason, you were going to open it! Cover it up this instant! Don't you realize it will bring us nothing but tragedy? Don't you realize it belongs to a *dead man?"*

"All right, Martha. I was just . . ."

"Cover it up, Jason. And don't do that again."

He covered it up. . . .

But still, as the days passed and the memory of the crash itself drifted further to the back of his conscious mind, there was still the shape of the sealed suitcase to obsess him. He saw it in his waking and sleeping hours, saw it closed as first he'd met it, and open with all its treasures exposed. It became, in various fantasies, a spy's hoard of secret plans, an embezzler's final crime, a businessman's stock of everyday valuables. He imagined all the hundreds of things that might come tumbling out if only

he looked. The things he'd never owned, like an electric razor, or a portable radio, or a fine camera.

No, decided Jason with finality, after a week of torment. Whatever was in that suitcase, it was not going to rot in the ground behind the barn. He found Martha in the kitchen and told her of his decision.

"I'm going to dig it up and open it," he said.

"Jason . . ."

"Nothing you can say will stop me, Martha. I have to know what's inside it."

"Jason, there's death in that suitcase. I can feel it in my bones."

"I have to *know!*" he screamed at her. And when she stepped heavily into his path he brushed her aside as he would some animal in the field.

"Stop, Jason!"

He hit her, only to shut that refusing mouth, only to silence her for a few important moments. She fell heavily, her head catching the edge of the old stove. He sucked in his breath and bent over her, chilled now to the bone. She wasn't moving and he knew in some fantastic manner that he'd killed her.

But he didn't stop. He hurried on to the barn, with a speed born now of nameless panic. The spade, digging in the familiar earth, uncovering, revealing.

Yes, the suitcase. Still there like some Pandora's box awaiting him. His hands fumbled with the straps, teeth biting into lips, forehead sweating a chill moisture.

But it was locked.

In to the barn, carrying it gently now, with clods of earth falling from it. Into the barn, and a few careful blows with the pitchfork, prying the lock apart until it snapped under the pressure. Finally.

He opened the suitcase. . . .

The government inspector found them, some time later, when he stopped by the Lean farmhouse to ask some further questions about the airliner crash. He found Martha Lean on the kitchen floor, and she looked so peaceful it was hard to believe she was dead.

And he found Jason Lean in the barn, kneeling in a sort of daze over an open suitcase. It was a salesman's sample case. It was filled with leather-bound Bibles. . . .

winner take nothing

by . . . Talmage Powell

If my determination weakened, all I had to do was look in a mirror. The faceful of acid had obliterated the man who'd once stood in my shoes.

The partial sight remaining in my left eye permitted me to view the remains—and I was drawn to the mirror several times each day after I was able to move about.

I knew Dinwiddie would respond to my call and come here this evening. He had no choice, when you got right down to it. His pose was that of sympathy and innocence, and he couldn't afford a discordant nuance to slip in. His was almost the first message of condolence I'd received in the hospital.

While I waited, in the cottage where I was convalescing, I thrust a cigarette in the left corner of my mouth. Smoking was an awkward experience. For years, I'd let my cigarettes dangle from the extreme right side of my lips without being actually conscious of the mannerism. Even though the partial facial paralysis, induced by the acid, made it impossible to smoke from the right side of my mouth,

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Talmage Powell, author of the just published START SCREAMING MURDER (Pocket Books), WITH A MADMAN BEHIND ME and GIRL'S NUMBER DOESN'T ANSWER (also Pocket Books), and other novels, turns here to an unusual background and to a man's decision, arrived at in agony and after careful consideration.

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that's where the cigarette wanted to be, in the old accustomed place.

I knew I had the capacity and endurance to overcome the lesser evils created by the acid. I might even have one day resumed my work as an opposition political leader on the regional level.

The one thing I could not survive was the moment following the moment when I'd had to show my face to Bryanne.

I had put it off as long as possible. I knew the doctors had warned her. I suspected they had done more, coaching her, preparing her. But there are experiences for which it is impossible to prepare fully. These experiences simply must be met and lived through.

My left eye seemed greatly strengthened in that moment. It caught every detail of her expression, the sudden whiteness of her lips, the shock and horror seared in her eyes.

Later, when we were alone, she'd said honestly, "I need time to think."

"I understand," I said. And I did. She was being as gentle as possible. But she had given the matter clarity, too. She'd intended to marry the man who had been, not this one. The door had closed behind her with a click of finality.

In my low point of bitterness and despair I'd wanted to hate her; but only the loss of her counted.

So perhaps after all it wasn't the mirror that strengthened me. The cold piece of glass revealed the endurable. The unendurable was in the memory of the click of a door.

My thoughts were broken by the brisk rapping of Dinwiddie's knuckles.

I opened the front door of the cottage to the cool of the evening —and to his presence.

He came in and I closed the door. I wasn't able to see him clearly, but I didn't need to. Since she had left, the mental picture of him had never been far from me, waking or sleeping.

He was a neat, smallish man with a deprecatory, retiring aspect about him. He had a pink, fleshy face with mild blue eyes. Small tufts of white hair grew from his ears, which protruded slightly. He was innocuous and gentle in appearance. So is a wild bunny seething with tularemia.

"I'm glad you're up and about, George," he said. "Your call interested me."

"I supposed it would."

"You referred to a statement I made to the papers." He moved about the cottage idly. "Comfortable place. No luxuries, but comfortable."

"Did you mean what you said, Dinwiddie?"

"I never make public statements without meaning them." He sounded quite serious. But in the privacy of this cottage and my near-blindness, I knew his face was filled with droll humor. "A man of

your ability will always find a place in public service, George. I believe that is what I said."

Among other things. He had made quite an oration when news broke that I was in the hospital. "We've had differences . . . A fighting opponent whom I respect . . . The culprit who perpetrated this horror must be caught and punished . . ." That sort of thing.

"Were you offering me a job, Dinwiddie?"

"Why not?"

"To a half-blind man, a broken man. A cowed dog to keep in harness, to watch, to keep under control."

"Ah, you do sound bitter, George."

"Merely factual."

"There are things you can do."

"In a harmless corner of a harmless office in a harmless agency in the state capital."

"One has to do the best one can . . . That's quite a good landscape." He walked to the oil painting, which hung on the west wall, and studied it. Without turning toward me, he added, "And you did lose the election, you know."

"I'm not prepared to be big about it."

"Oh, come now, George, it's over and done. I see no reason why we can't be friends. After all, my man is safely in. There's nothing you can do about it. You're thoroughly beaten, George—but don't make me rub your nose in it."

"It would be awkward," I conceded, "considering the amount of nose I have left."

"Good plastic surgeons work miracles nowadays. It's something to think about."

"Costly," I said.

"Oh, very."

"But the means would be found if I play ball."

"Well, we try to take care of the fellows on the team." He turned toward me slowly.

"As well as the boys on the opposition squad," I said. "Except the phrase, 'being taken care of', has a distinctly different meaning for them."

"You must get over these suspicions, George. They'll become a fixation."

"Why not? We both know where the acid came from."

"The acid was thrown by a crackpot as you came from a meeting at . . ."

"You sound like a parrot, Dinwiddie. It doesn't become you."

Hazily, I saw him raise his arm, slide his sleeve up slightly. "George, my secretary is calling for me in less than thirty minutes. If you have anything of importance to say, I'll give you ninety seconds to get started." He gave his attention to his wrist watch. I said nothing.

He dropped his arm to his side. "I accept your silence as favorable, George."

"You're unreachable, aren't you, Dinwiddie?"

"I don't care to discuss . . ."

"I almost reached you once, Dinwiddie. I was so close it frightened you. You knew you must stop me. You saw no other way. You had him hired. You had the acid put in his hand. You had him sent there."

He moved toward the door. I moved to cut him off.

"Now aren't we melodramatic, George," he said in soft scorn.

"I haven't finished what I was about to say," I said. "After you had him sent there, you arranged his escape. The police will never find him."

"A fact you must learn to live with, George."

"Where is he, Dinwiddie?"

"I haven't the faintest idea."

"Where did you find him? He was a professional thug for hire. You must have brought him in from outside."

"If he is caught, he will be punished. You must be satisfied with that, George."

"No," I said. "No. Because he was the tool. You're the man of ultimate guilt, Dinwiddie."

He made no further motion toward the door. Peering at me intently, he seemed to find a certain enjoyment and satisfaction in this moment. He had laid waste his enemies. Blind lust for power had motivated his life. This was a moment for such a man to savor.

"How do you intend to go about proving what you have said, George?"

"I know I can't."

He laughed softly.

"But one thing you've overlooked, Dinwiddie. I've nothing more to lose. Haven't you considered that I might kill you?"

"Preposterous! You? Of all people . . . ! You'd never dwell on such an idea."

I didn't refute him. With his first show of nervousness, he clapped his hat on his head and started around me. I took a step which kept me between him and the door.

"Even should you think of such a thing," he said, "you'd think again. You'd realize you'd have absolutely no chance of getting away with it."

He failed to understand the extent of my loss. He assumed that I still cared to live.

I put my hands on his throat suddenly. He thrashed his body, trying to get away from me. His fingers caught and tugged ineffectually at my wrists.

He tripped, and we fell. My grip didn't loosen. I took the life from him with surprising ease and speed. A few spasmodic jerkings of his body, the convulsive effort to tear my hands away—and then he was limp and dead. A weak little fellow. As limber as a lifeless, gray-tufted bunny.

I pulled away from him and sat in a chair. Several minutes passed. I had no sense of satisfaction. The George of old rose briefly inside of me, reminding me that there was no turning back or undoing this thing.

A light knocking sounded on the front door. I got up to admit Dinwiddie's secretary.

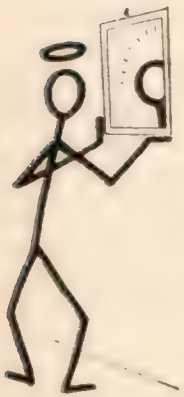
Instead, Bryanne was standing in the cool of the evening, on the cottage porch.

She looked at my face and it didn't bother her. "George," she said, "can you forgive me for being human? I was up against something that needed some getting used to. I knew pity was the last thing you wanted. Now, with a little time to get squared around, I know there is no pity. Only love . . . For the man, from the beginning, not merely his face . . ."

I closed the door hard against her words while she was still speaking.

There was no room for her in the house. . . .

NEXT MONTH–



THE MEANING OF THE ACT

by *MARGERY ALLINGHAM*

DYING ROOM ONLY

by *STEWART STERLING*

MURDER MASQUERADE

by *LAWRENCE TREAT*

THE GALLOPPING BANDITS

by *GEORGE FIELDING ELIOT*

THE RHINE MAIDEN

by *LESLIE CHARTERIS*

and **THE POKER PLAYER'S WIFE**

A NEW STORY by CORNELL WOOLRICH

—in the October issue of THE SAINT MYSTERY MAGAZINE

I did it for— me

by . . . Ed Lacy

HENRY BECAME a one-day headline-hero because he was wishfully thinking of doing away with his wife. While he never actually would have had the nerve to kill Martha, after 34 dull years of marriage he was as desperate as a mild man can become.

Henry didn't hate Martha, nor want in any way to harm her: he only wished to be rid of Martha. At 58 years of age, he was really damn bored with his way of living. Henry could sell his greeting card shop for a neat $8000 profit—which wasn't sufficient to carry both himself and Martha until he reached Social Security. But eight grand carefully spent in a little cosmopolitan village along the French or Italian Riviera might last Henry *alone* until he hit retirement age. Henry had lived a never-to-be-forgotten weekend in such a village outside Nice, during the war, and the leisurely, lush way of life was always in his dreams.

For a time his ambition had been to make enough money for both of them to retire to the south of France. But the card shop would never make *that* much, and Martha,

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Ed Lacy, author of more than a dozen novels including the recent ROOM TO SWING (Pyramid) and TIME RUNNING IN (Avon) has been called one of the more interesting among the newer names. Here he considers the problems of a mild little man.

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quite content with her civic clubs and the weekly bingo parties, always dismissed his ideas as "senile romantic slush." She openly-and often told him he was "some kind of nut to even consider leaving the good old USA."

Having neither children nor family ties to hold them down, for the past few years Henry had this completely frustrated feeling of time running out on him.

He loved to spend Sundays reading about the *Cote D'Azur*. Martha's idea of a bang-up Sunday was to drive the old car to a nearby national park, gush about the flowers and nature. When he mentioned how the area between Nice and Cannes was the perfume center of the world because it was teeming with flowers, Martha dismissed that as "pure rubbish." There was a rather steep mountain road in the national park and Martha had this habit of driving to the very top to see some special white moss flowers. It was a narrow, hair-pin-turn drive, and after going with her once, Henry never went again. He'd read his books in the park below while she drove up to see 'her' flowers.

Martha herself had given Henry the idea of how to do away with her. One Sunday she said, "A forest ranger warned me I'm taking a chance climbing that dirt road in our old heap. I mean, if I ever stalled on the way up, there isn't room to turn around, and backing all the way down that steep road could be real dangerous."

This Sunday, after reading about the film festival at Cannes, Henry had been desperate enough to pour a thermos of ice water into the gas tank, while Martha was stuffing herself at the hot dog stand. He figured there was a chance the water would sink to the bottom of the tank, perhaps stall the car when Martha was half way up the mountain.

(To his sincere relief) It didn't quite work out that way: she made it up the mountain and down again without incident, but the car did stall—on the way home, half a mile from a gas station.

It was late afternoon and as Henry stepped out of the car a flashy white roadster came tearing past them—from the opposite direction, a wild-eyed young man at the wheel. He nearly crashed into their stalled car. Martha yelled in her shrill voice, "The nerve of that idiot! I have his license number—YR-11-5!"

"All right, nothing happened, forget it. Wait here and I'll see if I can get a mechanic," Henry told her, starting for the gas station.

There were two mechanics on duty at the service station—both dead of bullet wounds. One had managed to phone the police before dying, and the cops arrived seconds after Henry walked in. Having a fear of becoming involved in anything, Henry never

said a word about the white roadster. The truth is: it never occurred to him there might be any connection between the wild driver and the hold-up killings.

When the police let Henry return to his car, he told Martha about the murders as he patiently took the carburetor apart, tried to blow out the water. Martha decided the reckless driver was the killer, but Henry told her to shut-up.

It took him about an hour to finally get the car going again. As they drove home they didn't know they were being followed by the white roadster—and in turn, the wild young man didn't know another witness—a bird watcher in the nearby woods had seen the hold-up via field glasses, had turned over a good description of the car and driver to the police. As the driver of the white car tailed Henry and Martha, he was in turn being followed by a motorcycle cop.

Henry and Martha were just taking off their shoes when the wild-eyed young man burst into their house, gun in hand. His voice was coldly calm as he told them, "Sorry folks, but I know you saw me making my get-away, heard your wife scream out my license number. Not certain if you've told the cops yet, or not, but I can't chance it."

"I don't understand," Henry mumbled. "W-what do you plan to do with us?"

"Only one thing I can do—kill you, silence you! If they ever collar me, I'm booked to die anyway, so I've nothing to lose by making sure you can't identify me."

"We didn't see a thing! We'll never say a word!" Martha yelled. "We . . . !"

"Keep your voice down!" the killer cut in, pointing his gun at her. "Anybody else in the house?"

"No sir," Henry told him. "Really sir, we haven't said a word to the police and we never will. If only you'll please. . . ."

Their doorbell rang. The motorcycle cop had waited until the reinforcements he'd radioed for had arrived.

Glancing at Henry, the killer whispered hoarsely, "Who's at the door? You expecting company?"

"No sir. Might be a neighbor. . . ."

Grabbing Martha, shoving his gun in her back, free hand over her big mouth, the young man told Henry, "I'm taking your wife into the next room. Get rid of whoever that is! If it's the cops, you know nothing. One wrong word, any tricks, and your wife gets it!"

"What?"

"I'll kill her—told you, they can only fry me once!"

"Y-yes sir," Henry said, as the bell rang again. The killer wrestled Martha into the bedroom, shut the door.

"Remember, I'll be listening back here," the killer called out. "One

wrong word and I swear your wife gets it!"

Henry nodded—almost afraid to believe his good luck. Opening the front door he immediately told the cops standing there, "He's in the bedroom with my wife—he has a gun!" Henry practically shouted the words—or tried to, but his mouth was dry.

Pushing past him, guns ready, the police flung themselves against the wall as one of them called, "Police! We have the house surrounded—you haven't a chance! Throw out your gun—walk out slowly with your hands high—before we blast the room!"

Seconds later the door opened. A gun came sailing through the air—then the killer stumbled out, hands over his head. He was sobbing.

Henry, who had been listening for the sound of a shot, saw Martha come racing by the killer. Throwing her fat self on Henry, she covered his face with kisses.

As the police captain told the press and TV cameras: ". . . Henry acted like a true citizen. Fully realizing the risk involved for his beloved wife, nevertheless, without a moment's hesitation, this brave man did the only responsibile thing a citizen could do—take *that* chance and nab this crazy thug! It was a terrible decision he faced, but by doing his duty, he helped the police and his fellow citizens!"

Several days later it was found the junkie-killer had a long record of gas station stick-ups: an insurance association had a $10,000 reward for his capture. Henry sold his shop and with $18,000 decided it was worth being on the Riviera for the balance of his life—even with Martha.

He didn't ask if she wanted to go, merely told her what *their* plans were and to start packing. Strangely enough, Martha didn't argue—ever since the incident she had been rather meek, almost seemed to regard Henry with new found respect.

VITAL STATISTICS

Peter Phillips, Book Critic of the London Daily Herald, and writing in The Crime Writer, the Journal of the (British) Crime Writers Association, comments on characteristics of the 15 million words of "crime fiction" he read during 1961.

"*Shooting* remains the chief murder weapon. Most favoured guns: the Luger, and the Smith and Wesson .38 (the seven shot Beretta seems to be out of favour).

Stabbing comes next, followed by *coshing* (with blunt instruments ranging from a cricket bat to a number five iron); *strangulation* and *poisoning* follow. Poisoning is nowadays accomplished with known substances. The day of the 'rare, deadly, undetectable Eastern poison' is over. *Drowning* and *suffocation* bring up the rear."

what's new in crime

by . . . Stefan Santesson

Mr. Joachim Joesten, author of THE RED HAND (Abelard-Schuman, $3.95) will be remembered as the one-time correspondent of a number of American and European newspapers in the Scandinavian countries where he lived from 1934 to 1940, after leaving Germany. Mr. Joesten subsequently wrote on aspects of life in these countries, often about people whom he had known, with a sense of the dramatic which prompted mixed reactions on the part of those for whom this manner of reportage was strange. He has since then also written, both in German and in English, books such as PRÄSIDENT KENNEDY; ONASSIS—HERR AUF ALLEN MEEREN; NASSER: THE RISE TO POWER; DOPE INCORPORATED; and THE LUCIANO STORY. And now, as his publishers put it, he has written "the sinister account of the terrorist arm of the French right-wing 'ultras'—in Algeria and on the Continent."

The trouble is that Mr. Joesten is writing about a subject and about a cause which most Americans, captive to latter-day generalizations about the "intransigent" DeGaulle, know little about and care less. The

Mr. Santesson, editor of this magazine since 1956 and former editor, between 1945 and 1952, of the Unicorn Mystery Book Club, continues his column of comment on recent mystery and suspense novels and other material of interest to SMM readers.

reality that the cause of the Algerian freedom-fighters, while intrinsically just, was obscured rather than aided by the rather less than selfless assistance extended to them from abroad, is unimportant to a generation which can find vaguely suspect any interest in anything that cannot be touched—or tasted—or viewed on a TV screen. It is not that we are an apolitical people, for there *is* a healthy minority, conservative as well as otherwise, who takes some interest in these matters; but, on the whole, we are not too interested in these matters, and it is therefore possible to approach a subject such as this in this manner.

There is no denying that France stands divided today. To what extent this can be blamed on the survival of what, for lack of a better word, may be called Petainism, is of course a matter for some discussion. There is no question also that many of those who support the OAS policy do so from a belief, a sincere belief, that the France *they* believe in is endangered by the present-day policy of the French Government vis-a-vis Algeria and what remains of the French Community. The reality that this is a question of France's survival in the Community of Nations is ignored out of loyalty to memories and to the dead—memories which *cannot* be translated into survival in today's Europe!

And so the widow of Albert Camus, the Nobel Prize winner, can come to the defense of General Edmond Jouhaud at the latter's trial in Paris (as reported in the May 1962 issue of U.S./FRANCE REPORT, published by the American Committee for France and Algeria, with which Colonel R. V. C. Bodley, James Burnham and others are connected); the DeGaulle Government's decision can be questioned by her and by hundreds of others, in Madame Camus' case because "our native land, the land of our birth, will cease to be French," but the reality *has* to be faced that this is NOT Metropolitan France speaking.

Mr. Joesten does not agree. Mr. Joesten repeatedly refers to the active collaboration, in pre-O.A.S. days) between these terrorists and elements in the French Secret Service and Police. On one occasion he spells it out, in the course of a reference to the Jeanson movements (pps. 176-177):

"This is, indeed, a new and different kind of patriotism, one that rejects the 19th-century concept of 'My Country right or wrong'—a concept born out of that very same spirit of imperialism and colonialism against which the Young Resisters of France have rebelled. The same sort of unorthodox patriotism which puts the love of freedom and justice ahead of tradition and the preservation of territorial holdings, animated millions of Germans in

their fight against Hitlerism. And it is being suppressed in Gaullist France by the police and abroad by the Red Hand in much the same brutal manner which the Nazis used in the Third Reich."

I think it is clear that I do not share Mr. Joesten's approach to these matters, this tendency to ignore the reality that is Algeria; it cannot be presented so—so simply. . . . The book is interesting as a report on a series of politically motivated crimes, responsibility for which may be correctly ascribed to one group of people.

But this is emphatically NOT History!

Again, as was the case with Andrew Tully's C I A (Morrow), discussed here some months ago, we get a decidedly unorthodox glimpse of recent world history. Anthony Pirie's OPERATION BERNHARD (Morrow, $5.00) has been called "one of the best cloak-and-dagger stories yet to come out of World War II," by Virginia Kirkus, and there is considerable truth to this description of the book. This, in brief, is the story of how the German military successfully counterfeited over One Hundred Thousand Pounds in English bank notes —and then proceeded to distribute them. The notes were used to pay the salaries of German agents in enemy countries, and financed the rescue of Mussolini from the Badoglio regime. It also, as we see, financed the activities of a score of the great and the near-great who early saw the writing on the wall and realized that it was time to plan for a day when the Fuehrer's word could not mean life or death.

Viewed from this standpoint, the book is an excellent study of the rapid collapse of what had seemed a monolithic regime—a regime which relying heavily on the authority-slanted *mystique* of the millions behind it had created a bureaucratic colossus that crashed with resounding thoroughness. The picture of harassed officials, fleeing from Doom, but reluctant to do this or that unless they had at least telephoned authority to do so, is a revealing commentary on how lacking in initiative these men were, except for those who were answerable only to the Fuehrer. Here a man could sit in Kaltenbrunner's temporary headquarters, with Kaltenbrunner himself away for the moment, and answer in Kaltenbrunner's name—without authority to do so, of course—call after call asking what was to be done with the administrative skeletons which were being hurriedly buried (including the unused Pound notes) hours before the Allies were due. Shall I burn this? Shall I destroy this? Shall I let these people go? Shall I shoot these people? One

(*please turn to page 115*)

the silence of steve spangas

by . . . Avram Davidson

Detective Peguys (sometimes called Pig-Eyes, but never to his face) looked around the barbershop, and said, "What a mess!"

Detective Carpenter, thin and lantern-jawed, made a sound midway between a sigh and a grunt, shook his head.

"*What* a mess," Peguys repeated. He had reference not only to those elements of the physical make-up of the deceased which remained in the place after his body (photographed more thoroughly in death than its owner had cared for in life) was removed. "Oh, *boy*, what a mess," said Detective Peguys.

"Okay, Steve, let's hear how it happened," Carpenter said.

Steve Spangas, the boss barber, clasped his face in his hands, rocked his face from side to side, wept silently.

"Yeah, I know. Let's hear how it happened." Peguys rested his hand on the barber's shoulder, dug in with his fingers. The barber looked at him, first protest, then pain, showing on his face; more bewildered than accusing. The de-

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Avram Davidson, winner of this year's Mystery Writers of America award for the best mystery story of the year, and a frequent contributor to this magazine, here describes a very messy happening in a small city located very near to a big city, as the author puts it. Mr. Davidson is editor of the Magazine of Fantasy and Science Fiction.

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tective relaxed the pressure of his grip a bit. Not much, though.

"Talk," he said. "Talk, Steve."

Living in a small city located very near to a big city has its advantages, but it has its disadvantages, too; and one of them is often the absence of a first-class hotel.

This particular small city didn't even have a second-class hotel.

The Penton House defied a close classification. It was not a flea-bag . . . quite. On the other hand, you wouldn't dare try to put your visiting aunt up there, no matter how much of a nuisance she was as a house-guest, no matter how good an excuse you were able to come up with in the way of, say, a sick child, or repairs or redecoration in progress. The rooms were big enough and clean enough and the rates were reasonable enough, but the runners were just that much too worn and the elevator just that too rickety-looking and the young or youngish women who lived there just that too bold.

Really, the only thing in the Penton House which looked new and efficient and in any way attractive was its barbershop. This opened on the lobby from one side and from the street on the other, and that morning about ten o'clock an opulent and heavy-set man named Tom Guerling was being tempered with hot towels when some men came in off the street and shot him to death with blooey-guns.

The blooey-gun has declined in favor as an instrument of urban warfare, and this is perhaps just as well, because it is an ugly weapon. Basically it is a shot-gun, not sawed-off, because the mere possession of a sawed-off shotgun is illegal. An ordinary shotgun and shells. The shells are opened, the pellets removed, and melted down to form slugs, one of which is then reinserted into each shell. When the gun goes off it makes a noise like *blooey!* and if one of the slugs hits you you are dead, just like that, *blooey!*

Two of them hit the man in the barbershop chair, one in the head and one in the thorax, of which the said Thomas Guerling, also known as Tom Guerling, also known as Tommy Joe Guerling, did then and there instantly expire.

The murder inevitably raised the question, Why was it committed? And the answer was only too obvious.

Tommy G. had been the local *controlleur* of bookmaking, card- and dice-gambling, the numbers business, and that activity to which the local newspaper referred to (when it referred to it at all, that is, which was seldom, it being much more interested in reproving the President of the United States) as "vice."

All of which meant rivals. In other words, enemies; for in this business competition is the death of traders.

People were sure to ask why, if the police had known about all this while Tommy G. was alive, as they must have, else what were they drawing their wages for?—if they had known about this, why hadn't they done anything about it? A complicated situation, embarrassing all around, and one which was likely to arouse extreme hostility on the part of the police towards the killers.

"Okay, Steve: talk," said Detective Peguys.

Steve's face was still grey with shock. He wriggled under the painful grasp, but without quite seeming to connect his discomfort with its source. He began to talk, every few words punctuated with a half-stifled groan . . .

He shaved Tommy Guerling every morning. Every morning but Sunday. He cut his hair every two weeks, shampooed it every other two weeks, singed it every couple of months. But every weekday morning he gave him a shave, and the shave was always accompanied by the application of hot towels. Tommy G. liked hot towels. He liked strongly-scented toilet waters, too, and the electric vibrator . . .

"That's not what I mean, *Talk'!*" said the police officer. "I mean, 'What *hap*pened?' "

"Oh!—'Happened'? Oh. He was lying in the chair, with the towel over his face—I went to get a couple more—my back was turned—I hear *—blam! blam!*—he kicks with his feet, he kicks *out*—and I'm on the floor, I don't know if I *fell*—or—and then I get up—and—ohmi*god*, ohmi*god*, ohmi*god* . . ."

He looked down at his blood-stained jacket, at the bloody floor and walls: red upon white. Red red upon blinding white. Spasm after spasm convulsed his face and sent tremors through his body.

"Peguys means, like 'what happened': you know, who *did* it? You know the guy? You see him before?"

Spangas shook his head, said nothing.

"You saw who *did* it."

In a voice so low it was almost a whisper, Steve said, "No. No, I . . . my back . . . my back was turned . . ."

Peguys drew back his head, looked at the barber challengingly. Carpenter tapped his partner's arm. They withdrew to confer.

"What do you think? He's levelling?" Carpenter asked.

"Uh-uh."

Carpenter sucked morosely on a tooth. Then he said, "How come? I mean, he's always levelled be*fore*. All the time. Whenever we ask him, he always tells. In fact, *you* know it, Peguys, half a the time you don't *have* to ask him; he practically meets you at the door with the information."

His partner's tiny eyes became tinier yet, almost vanished into his broad cheeks. "Yeah. You just said

it. 'Meets you at the door.' He practically meets *ev*erybody at the door. So how come he didn't meet *this* guy at the door?" He swung around.

"Spangas. I known you for years. Fifteen? More. I know you from before the War, when you worked for old Patsy Terranova on Water Street. I remember when your kid was little and he used to bring you your dinner, all wrapped up, before he went back home to eat, himself. I used to be in Patsy's, regular, to get my hair cut. Huh? Didn't I? Okay . . . So I *know,* Steve— I mean, don't try and tell *me,* 'Your back was turned, you didn't see him come in,' because, *lis*ten, Spangas!" he said, ugly, head cocked, threatening. "List-*en*—I never saw anyone come into a place that you were there, I never *heard* anyone come into the place that you were there, *without you looking up to see who it was!*"

Spangas retreated, looked fearfully at his tormentor, silent.

"*Oh,* yeah! Never mind if your back was turned, you'd twist your head like your neck was made of rubber, you'd *look*. Because you're the kind of guy who's always got to know what's going on, every single minute, Steve, every single second! And when you say you didn't see who came in, you didn't see who it was done it, you're *lying!*" His voice rose to a shout. "So *talk!*"

The barber breathed quickly, but said nothing.

In a calmer tone of voice, the voice of a man who can afford to be calm because he has control, the detective continued his charge.

"You're a good barber, Steve, but you never could hold on to your money—could you? So you lost your shop. But it was like the same thing when you were a journeyman. 'Take a seat, I'll be right with you,' or 'Only one ahead of you,' or maybe it was only, 'Good morning.' Right? Do I know your habits, or don't I? Huh?"

Steve Spangas smiled weakly.

"Sure I do. And even now, Steve, even *now,* when you're the manager here for Old Lady Shermack since her husband died couple months back, resthissoul, it's a good job, two other barbers under you, you can eat in restaurants now, your kid wouldn't have to be bringing you lunch no more even if he was still small enough to be still going to school," Peguy's voice fell into a sort of chant and the barber followed each clause of it with a tiny little nod; "but, Steve, I *know* you, I *know* you, Steve, I *see* you: and let me tell you, if anybody walked into this shop and you were here, *you saw who it was!*"

But this, while it had an effect, had not the effect intended. The barber was meant to talk. Instead, he fainted.

The two detectives laid him out in one of his own chairs. It must not be thought that they were completely callous. The chair they

selected was one of those which had no blood on it.

While Carpenter was wearily sprinkling Steve Spangas with water, it happened that Manny and Vito, the other two barbers, turned up almost simultaneously. But there was nothing to be gained from them: Manny was only now reporting to duty (he stayed on later, at night, than Vito), and Vito, who had opened the shop with Steve, had been almost at once called away to drive his pregnant sister-in-law to the hospital.

"Wait in the lobby," Peguys told them.

As the two journeymen went out a uniformed policeman came in, followed by a clergyman. With rusty movements, the two detectives removed their hats.

"Is this the man who— Is that?" the cleric asked.

"Oh, uh, no, uh, Reverend," Carpenter said, pausing in his task of aspersing Spangas. "This is the barber who was here at the time it happened. He just passed out, *he'll* be all right. The, uh, body, it's been removed. To Colt's Memorial Chapel. I guess the autopsy—but it'd be all right for you to *go* there, if—"

"This is Reverend Glomeyer," the patrolman said. "He thinks maybe he seen the men who done it."

Every trace of stiff deference vanishing at once, the detectives started forward, speaking at once, then, both together, stopping.

"We-el-l-l," the minister said, dubiously, "I really don't know. What happened is this. I was passing the hotel when I heard this noise. Noises. I thought a car was backfiring. So I paid no attention. And I did observe two men come out. But I didn't pay any attention. I was on my way to see Carl Miller, he's an elder in our church, fine man. I was on my way to see him about my insurance. His office is in the next block. And my mind was on *that* subject."

No, he didn't know what they looked like. "Where did they go?" He hadn't noticed. "Did they get in a *car?* Had he heard a car start just then?" He really didn't recall. "How tall were they?" Well—

Carpenter suggested, "About my size?" Yes—about that size. "Or—" Carpenter proposed, gesturing to Peguys, who was a good five inches shorter; "—about his size?" Yes, the minister said, about his size . . . The two officers exchanged hopeless glances, then inquired how the two men had been dressed. But no further details were forthcoming, none, that is, that could be of real use. The pastor had heard two noises, saw two men come out of the barbershop, had continued to Carl Miller's insurance office in the next block. While there he had heard shouting from the street, but again paid no attention. Only on coming down, seeing the crowd and

having heard the news, did it occur to him that he might have heard the fatal shots and seen the slayers.

By the time the minister finished explaining all this and left, Steve Spangas had gotten up from his chair. His brief black-out seemed to have acted as a restful sleep. The barber moaned no more, stripped off the bloody jacket, and insisted he be allowed to clean up shop.

But the police had other ideas.

"Who did it, Steve?"

"Got no idea."

"If two men came into this shop, you *saw* them. Like always."

"Nope. Not this time."

Peguys swung sharply around. "You're a liar, Spangas!" he cried. "And I know why! You're scared! You're a yellow-bellied coward! Oh, sure, you can give us information when we ask you about some small-time crook, yeah; and you can put out the flag on the holidays, sure, and you think you're a good citizen. It's easy to talk, huh?" This last taunt seemed not to affect the barber at all, perhaps because he was obviously finding it easier not to talk.

Nor did he reply to the charge that, when the chips were down, when it came to doing his duty, he acted like any pool-room bum.

"Because you're scared, Steve! Scared to say what you saw!"

But Steve continued to shake his head.

Detective Carpenter tried a different tactic: vinegar failing, he put out the honey-pot. "It was an out-of-town job, Steve," he said. "There *is* no danger, not to *you*, see, because once we get a description we can alert the whole country and pull in those hoods in no time, we get a quick trial and a conviction. The—whoever it was who hired the torpedoes—aren't interested in ordinary citizens who do their duty, *you* know that."

"Can't help you," said Steve Spangas.

"We'll give you a twenty-four hour guard."

"Didn't see anyone."

Carpenter looked at Peguys. He laughed. Taking the cue, Peguys laughed, too. "You're as good as dead, then," Carpenter said. "You know why? Because—*use your head, Steve!*—even if you *did*n't see, they'll think you *did!* And are they going to sit back and worry about you maybe fingering them? Uh-uh. Ixnay. Now, be smart, fellow. They got every reason to get after you, and they *will*, too. So don't think you'll play it safe by keeping quiet. The only safe thing for you to do, is *talk*, Steve, *talk!* Because you were the only one here, not Manny, not Vito, only *you*. And no other customer.

"That makes only four people knowing just what happened: you, Tommy G., and the two torpedoes. And Tommy G. is dead; *boy*, is he dead! And unless you talk, fellow, *you* are going to be dead, too, and

we won't lift a finger to help you, right, Peguys?"

"Right."

"So talk."

Steve Spangas looked old. He looked worn. But he stayed silent.

His mood seemed to communicate itself to the others. For a while there was no sound at all in the barbershop. Then Peguys snapped his fingers. "Sure," he said. "Sure." He got up, walked slowly over to the barber, who stood at bay against the mirrored wall.

"How much did you owe him, Steve," the detective asked.

"Who?"

"Who?" Peguys shouted, outraged. "Tommy G. is *who!"*

Carpenter unfolded from the slouch he lapsed into, and stalked over to join his partner. "You're right," he said.

"You always did like to play the ponies," Peguys said, in a tone so light it seemed almost bantering, indulgent. "That's why you lost your shop. *I* know. Sure . . . You must of owed Tommy plenty. And he was pushing you for it. Maybe he threatened to have you, uh, roughed up a little bit, huh?" Peguys chuckled. "So—"

Carpenter carried on the theme. "So you got there first, huh? You fingered him, didn't you?" He reached out suddenly and grabbed the front of the barber's shirt. *"Are you going to talk?"*

Pale, frightened, but determined, Spangas shook his head.

"Then we got to take you in," Carpenter said. He released the shirt, reached for the barber's arm. Spangas drew it away. The crowd outside, which had been quiet, broke into loud talk, turned to face the street. Suddenly the place seemed filled with police, uniformed and plain clothes. And in the midst of them, two men, handcuffed, and looking quite dishevelled.

"These them, Pete?" Carpenter asked.

Detective Peters nodded. "Caught 'm at the city line. Must of been heading for the bridge, I guess. Guy in the pretty blue shirt—" he shoved one of the prisoners, contemptuously. The man stumbled. Steve Spangas thrust up his arm and put him on balance again. "—was driving. Drove right into a garbage truck. Must of been *ner*vous, or something. *Haw, haw!* Quill and Martin come along in the patrol car just then, started asking questions. Little Boy Blue, here, he give *him* a smack or two, and he sung like a real cute blue-bird!"

The other police officers started laughing. The bigger of the two captives began to curse, in a low, intense voice. A detective hit him, and he stopped, abruptly.

Peters went on, "Told us who gave them the contract, how much they got, how much they were supposed to get—everything."

"You won't do anything to me,

will you?" the man in the blue shirt asked, his voice trembling. "I told you everything—I can turn state's evidence, can't I?"

"You can *try*," somebody said.

Then, suddenly, the man in the blue shirt was on his knees in front of Steve Spangas, was trying to embrace him with his manacled hands, was weeping.

"I'm sorry," he cried. "I didn't know you worked here, now. I'm sorry for all the things— I didn't know! I never would've come here if I knew! I'm sorry, Poppa! I'm not much good, but I never would've come here if I knew! Don't let them do anything to me, Poppa!"

The police stared. Steve Spangas stroked his son's hair, looked at them all, said nothing. Then everyone began to talk at once—but Steve Spangas stayed silent.

(continued from page 107)

after another these officers of a collapsing regime, who yesterday had dominated Europe, were calling for authority which was immediately given them, there over the phone, in Kaltenbrunner's name.

Apart from the fact that it is the story of this fantastic counterfeiting conspiracy, Anthony Pirie's OPERATION BERNHARD is also an extremely interesting footnote to history. Don't miss it!

Other winners announced at MWA's Awards Dinner were Edward Fenton for the best juvenile mystery of 1961, THE PHANTOM OF WALKAWAY HILL (Doubleday) (Phyllis A. Whitney had won in 1960 and there were a number of people at the Awards Dinner at the Hotel Astor, on April 13th, who seemed to feel that she should have won again . . .); Fredrick Knott, playwright, for the best mystery play, WRITE ME A MURDER; Truman Capote and William Archibald for writing the best mystery motion picture of 1961, THE INNOCENTS, based on Henry James' THE TURN OF THE SCREW (no comment!); and Leigh Vance and John Lemont for the best mystery television show of the year, WITNESS IN THE DARK.

ms. found in an attic

by . . . Michael Avallone

THE PLOT HAD taken hold. He had thought of it for days. Now he was in a fever to put it down before he lost it altogether. Feverishly, he drew the foolscap toward the light of the lone candle in the room. Hastily, he dipped his pen in the bottle of ink and began the tale that had plagued him since the beginning. It must be right this time.

". . . . I was, to all appearances, a normal man. Yet, deep within my breast, lurked and throbbed a sentiment that set me apart from my fellow man.

I abhorred cats . . . abhorred them with a ferocity and pertinacity of feeling that had long since quit the limits of human sanity. Why so, do you ask? I had not the answer. All the people who had borne my name before me, lived to my knowledge untainted by this curse.

What can I say?—save that the very presence of the beast had been sufficient provocation for my quick departure from the surrounding vicinity. I could not comprehend why. All I knew and was conscious of, was that, the curved archness of a cat's back, the stealthy glide of

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What do we really know about the personality of the man who was Edgar Allan Poe? Poe was a popular and prolific writer and no doubt had problems similar to those faced by equally popular and prolific writers in these days. Mystery writer Michael Avallone explores this interesting possibility in the present little vignette . . .

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its panther-like form, the sibilant noises it uttered, filled me with a disgust and revulsion that rendered me completely demoralized.

The intervals exceeded scores when I had walked blocks around my destination to avoid the animal as it appeared, crouched over some discarded refuse before me. I had long lived in dread of cats, with all hope of a sensible, normal existence despaired of, when the day of my delivery arrived.

A drab, dismal day in March brought out of a steadily darkening northern sky, a lashing, torrential rain that seemed to engulf the earth with water. Down, down, down splashed the drops in a rhythmic cadence which it seemed would never end.

When this precipitation of Godly wrath abated sufficiently to permit an excursion into the streets, I proceeded along Basker Drive, commencing my nightly constitutional. The day had been long and singularly dreary and as I made my way down the poorly-lighted gloomy thoroughfare, my spirits were indeed at low ebb. My existence, as I have endeavored to explain, was a terrifying, pitiful succession of periodic spasms of joy and pain. My insane hatred of cats had consigned me to a Hell on Earth, from which I would never escape.

The rain, which had gradually lessened, suddenly ceased, and as I jerked my head skyward in appreciation of this natural phenomenon, a low, whining sound assailed my ears. A sound, as to occurrence, is a matter of moments; but this deadly whine was an eternity. Even when the sound had stopped, its memory lingered in every tormented fiber of my being!

I cringed, perspiration springing to my forehead, as I leaned against a nearby wall for support. My eyes throbbed fiercely as the echo of that cursed moan reverberated through my shocked senses.

Desperately I whirled, my widened eyes questing furiously the gloom-enveloped surroundings. I closed them in horror as a wild cry parted my lips. Crouched against the crumbling wall, its form a spindly miracle, with sorrowful, dreamy orbs was a cat!—a starved, skeleton of a cat! A second moan of despair, a cry more terrible than the first, caused my eyes to open.

You who read, this must appreciate my feelings and sympathize deeply. When a cat was near, I was prisoner to a sentiment which was not my own. A madman, obsessed with a hatred of un-natural aspects. So I say, I sought my escape. I backed in horror from the spectacle of the Starvation Cat—backed agonizingly slow from its detestable, hideous presence.

The following events were a jumbled manipulation of the strings of Fate (who must watch over us poor mortals with bemused eyes) which has long since held a fascination for me. The sidewalk

which covered the distance between myself and the cat, came to surging, shattering life as a massive form of masonry fell upon it with a roar of sound that deafened my eardrums. The cat sprang backwards with a piercing wail as I fell heavily to the ground, overcome with fright. My being of tortured nerves and senses screamed for the release from pain offered by merciful sleep.

The falling masonry had evidently been torn loose by the rising winds of the previous days and due to some freak of nature or faulty architecture, had suddenly loosened to collapse directly where I had been standing ere I had leaped backwards to avoid the cat.

I lay thus sprawled out while my dulled mind strove to clear itself of a pounding confusion. I was bound to confess that were it not for that starved, sorrowful cat, I would most likely be a mere bloody mass buried beneath the fallen debris. Miraculously, my mind found the path of light and the dawn of a great truth. My tomb was opened! The bane of my life had also been its preservation!

A great surge of love choked my very being as I rose from where I lay and started for the cat as it lay, hugging the wall, whimpering and afraid. Tears filled my eyes as it gratefully sought the safety and seclusion of my outstretched arms. A mighty sob welled up in my chest when it nuzzled contentedly at my breast. My emotions were of the deepest, purest sincerity. I, who had lived to hate cats, owed my very existence, to one of that race!

My spirits were of dreams and hope and as I walked homeward with the cat safe in my arms, the world seemed like a beautiful forest; overflowing with God's chosen creatures—bird, man and beast. . . ."

Suddenly, he put the pen down and placed long, thin hands to his tired eyes. He remained in that attitude for a long time. Only the entrance of his tiny, pale wife stirred him.

"It's tea time," she said. "A cup will cheer you."

He shook his scholarly head.

"Would that it could, my dear. Would that it could—"

"Why, my darling—whatever is the matter?"

"Bother!" he snorted angrily, sweeping the foolscap sheets to the floor. "Why should I manufacture these saccharine happy endings? Why should I ladle out sweetness and light when my world is dark and dreadfully somber? I'll not conform to the penny-sweets sticky sentimentality of the day. I'll write this tale my own way or not at all!"

His wife surveyed the litter of his efforts with wistful reproach.

"Edgar," she said with mock severity. "You may re-write your *'Black Cat'* a thousand times if you like. But as of this minute, you're coming down for tea—"

along came a spider

by . . . Don McKinney

It was a little before nine on a Saturday morning in mid-July when Helen Morrison ran into my kitchen. I remember the time because I had wanted to sleep late and I hadn't been able to, and finally I'd gotten up around eight and fixed some breakfast and was just starting on my coffee when she burst in. She was wearing a pair of tight slacks and a man's white shirt and her feet were bare. She had no make-up, and her face was very white. "Frank, you've got to help me," she said in a thin, frightened voice. "I think he's dead."

"Who's dead?" I said automatically.

She stood there rigidly, her fists clenched at her sides, her lower lip trembling as she fought for control. "Charles," she said finally. "He didn't . . . come down for breakfast and I called and he didn't answer and I went up to his room . . ." She didn't finish. Suddenly her body seemed to lose its stiffness, as if she had been a scarecrow in a field and you'd suddenly removed the pole that held it upright, and as she collapsed I caught her in my arms. She did not make a sound and I picked her up and carried her into my living room and laid her

Don McKinney makes a first appearance in these pages with this story of an artist for the men's adventure magazines who suddenly finds himself confronted by the sort of situation he'd often illustrated—but never thought could happen—and to him. . . .

down on the studio couch.

With my arms still under her I kneeled there for a moment, looking down at her body. Even with what Helen had just told me, and I remember being a little ashamed of this, I felt the slow beginning of desire. There was a kind of haunting fragrance about her that had always reminded me of high school dances in the spring a long time ago, even though our relationship had not been that of gawky adolescents.

I was still kneeling there when she stirred slightly and turned her face toward mine. She blinked and tried to say something and then she threw her right arm around my neck and pulled me to her. She was still trembling, but now it was a release of tension, not the prelude to a breakdown. For several moments we did not speak; I just held her, as you would a frightened child. But Helen Morrison was no child.

When I felt that she was finally under control I pulled my arms out from under her and stood up. "Can you tell me now?" I asked.

She nodded, but she was biting the inside of her lip and I could see that she did not yet trust herself to speak. "Have you called the police?" I asked. She shook her head violently, and I could see the fear flooding back into her eyes. "No!" she cried hoarsely. "Not yet!"

"Maybe I'd better go take a look."

She lay there, watching me, not speaking. There was a kind of helpless, pleading look in her eyes, as if she was asking me if she could trust me—if she dared to trust anybody. "Don't worry," I said. "I won't do anything until I get back."

She didn't move and I smiled reassuringly, or what was meant to be reassuringly, and went out through the kitchen and down the porch steps and across the patch of lawn that separated our houses.

We live in Wilton, Connecticut, which is one of the commuting towns outside of New York City. I'm a commercial artist, for the men's adventure magazines. You know the sort of thing; high breasted women with their clothes half torn off and bare chested men fighting off crocodiles or maddened pygmies or God knows what all else. It isn't very cultural, but the pay is good enough to keep me in Wilton, and if you know Connecticut at all you'll understand that you don't pay the bills there on a grocery clerk's salary.

My wife had been a receptionist for one of the magazines I worked for; that's how I first met her. After we were married we lived in the city for a few years and then when we got enough saved we made the big move. That was the beginning of the end, I suppose, although it would probably have ended anyway. She met a civil engineer from Cleveland at one of those big drunker affairs that pass for parties

in towns like this one, and she'd run off with him.

I stayed in the house, hoping she'd come back, I guess, and then about five months later I got a call from an insurance claims adjustor telling me she was dead. There was an old $1,000 policy that we'd both forgotten about, and the company couldn't pay it until they were sure her death wasn't a suicide. I told him I hadn't seen her for a long time so I couldn't help him, but I didn't want the money anyway so they could forget about it as far as I was concerned. I didn't hear any more for awhile and then I got a check for a thousand dollars from the company, so all I ever knew about what finally happened to her was that she hadn't killed herself.

I could have investigated easily enough, I suppose, but by that time all I could think about was Helen Morrison. The Morrisons had moved in next door a few months before my wife left. We'd known them casually; cocktails every now and then, at the beach club, and of course we'd run into each other at parties. I was taken with Helen from the first. I told her once that she'd make a wonderful model, after giving her a fairly detailed description of the physical characteristics that the men who buy my magazines seem to admire, and instead of being shocked she had just smiled and said; "All you've got to do is ask me."

A week or so later I'd been having a fight with my wife and when I got to the party I'd proceeded to get drunk. Later I was taking a walk to sober up a little and I'd run into Helen. Maybe she'd followed me out, I don't know. She asked me about the modelling again, and I kind of laughed it off and she said maybe I wouldn't laugh if I could see her without her clothes.

I thought she was kidding—it was the kind of thing that got said at those parties, and mostly it's just talk—but Helen wasn't the kidding kind. Before I realized what she was doing she'd slipped out of her blouse and brassiere and was stepping out of her skirt.

I remember a momentary feeling that I ought to stop her, and then she was standing there in a pair of yellow high-heeled sandals and not a damn thing else. "Do you think they'd like me, the men who read those magazines?" she asked. I didn't think it was necessary to answer, and so I didn't.

We got back to the party about an hour later. I don't know whether my wife knew what had happened, but when she saw us walking back hand-in-hand across the lawn it didn't improve her mood. Things were beginning to fall apart, anyway.

Helen never did model for me—I guess she never really intended to—but she did about everything else. It was amazing the extremes we went to just to be together. Thou-

sands of people have written about love and said it much better than I could, so I won't try. I'm not sure it was really love, anyway. All I know is that I had to see her, had to touch her, that I went crazy wondering what she was doing when we weren't together.

We would meet in the city and she would take the afternoon off and we would go to a cheap hotel room or the apartment of a friend who was out of town; long passionate afternoons that left us both physically and emotionally exhausted. But our happiness—if it ever was happiness—didn't last. The strain of deception was too much; we began to fight, to accuse each other of insincerity or, God help us, infidelity.

Even after my wife left it wasn't any better. We would break up for weeks at a time, and then I would look out of a window and see her in her yard and the longing would start up again. She would slip over late at night and we would make love violently and then the trouble would start again.

We told ourselves it would be better if we were together all the time—that we wouldn't destroy ourselves then. But it was hopeless. She said Charles wouldn't divorce her; that he'd never let her go. I had wished him dead a hundred times. Perhaps that was why I was not so shocked when she told me that he was.

The moment she had spoken that morning I had felt a wave of pity and tenderness that I'd never felt before. She seemed so alone and helpless, like a little child who's lost her mother. I know it sounds crazy, but that's how it was.

This is what I was thinking as I stepped over the low privet hedge that separated our properties and went up onto her back porch. The screen was closed but the door was open and I pushed inside. The house was still, deadly still. I remember that a faucet in the sink was dripping slowly into a coffee cup filled with water, and the sound seemed very loud. I called out "Charles, it's me, Frank Bannerman!" Nothing.

I walked slowly through the hall and up the carpeted stairs. Helen's bedroom was on the left; there was a flimsy blue nightgown on the rumpled bed and some slippers on the floor beside it. The hot yellow sun was streaming in through the window, and it seemed out of place in this death-still house. Across the hall was another bedroom. The door was shut. I knocked once. Then I took a deep breath and turned the knob and went inside.

The first thing I saw was Charles Morrison's face, his hollow, glazed eyes staring at a point somewhere over my head. Then, as I stood there, the face turned away and my eyes followed up the length of rope that extended from where it was biting into his purplish neck to the heavy metal light fixture above his

head. His mouth was half-open but his teeth were clenched and I could see the tip of his tongue; as if it had been bitten off and then glued to the outside of his teeth. He was wearing a pair of pajama pants, but nothing else covered his lean body. A breeze stirred up again and his corpse twisted slowly and came back toward me. I fought down a desire to scream.

My first impulse was to cut him down, but I didn't. That old phrase that I'd read in so many mysteries —"Don't touch anything"—came into my mind and froze me to the spot. I don't know how long I stood there; you seem to go into a kind of trance at times like that, and time passes very rapidly. All I can remember is standing there watching his body twisting slowly back and forth, swinging around until his back was toward me and then steadily, relentlessly, coming around until for a few seconds he was facing me and then on past again. I don't suppose I moved at all; I barely even breathed.

Then, suddenly, I came out of it. Something didn't fit. A lot of things didn't fit, I found out later, but what hit me first was the fact that there was no toppled chair beneath his feet. He had to have climbed up on something, and yet there was nothing there. Perhaps Helen had moved it . . . but why?

There were only two chairs in the room; one was a heavy armchair 15 feet away and next to the window, and the other was a desk chair, which was placed in its proper slot under the desk. Even if she had involuntarily picked it up, would she have returned it so neatly to the desk?

I felt suddenly alert, my nerves tense. I looked quickly around the room for a note, but there was nothing. I turned back to the body. I had already begun to think of it as that—as a body, that is, rather than a human being named Charles Morrison. My eyes swept over him and then I noticed something else —his hair was wet. Why? Would he have taken a bath before killing himself?

I went back to the door and paused, listening, but there was no sound downstairs. Then I walked quickly down the hall to the bathroom. The water was still in the tub; the bathtowel marked "His" was lying in a damp and crumpled heap on the tile floor. I tried to tell myself that it didn't make sense, yet I knew it did. It made perfect sense. He had not killed himself; someone had done it for him. And there could only be one person.

It would not have been too difficult. She finds him in the bathtub. She hits him hard enough to stun him. Then she pushes his head down and holds him under until he has drowned. I started back toward the bedroom, following her trail. I knew what I was looking for now, and I easily spotted the damp places on the hall rug. She

had dragged his body down the hall, and the water on the floor had dried but not on the rug.

In the room she had taken the rope and knotted it around his neck. Then she had passed the other end up over the light fixture and pulled until his feet had risen off the floor. She had tied the rope at the top, cut off the loose end, and then, acting automatically, she had put the chair she had stood on back in its place at the desk and run across to call me.

I felt that I was working this out analytically and unemotionally, but I must have been very tense because I can still remember the sudden, involuntary shock that shot through me when I heard her voice.

I whirled around. She was standing in the doorway, her hands down at her sides, an almost helpless child's look on her face. She said, "Is he . . . is he dead?"

The phony innocence outraged me. "Of course he's dead!" I snapped. "You know God damned well he is!"

I don't know how I expected her to react—my words came out so quickly that I don't suppose I had even had time to think about how they might hit her—but I know I was surprised at what did happen. She just stood there a few more seconds, blinking rapidly with her mouth twisted in what was almost a parody of a smile, and then she crumpled into a little heap, just like a shirt falling off a clothesline.

You won't believe this; I hardly believe it myself, so I can't expect you to. Even with what I knew about her, I bent down and picked Helen Morrison up in my arms and carried her across the hall and put her down on her bed. She had murdered a man, had coldly killed her own husband, yet my first thought was for her.

I have no idea what I would have done if she hadn't come around just then. Would I have called the police? I'll never know because she *did* wake up and she looked at me with such a deep terrified anguish that I knew I had no choice but to help her. "Frank," she said in that scared voice, "don't hate me. Please, Frank . . ."

I tried to speak, but I couldn't. "It was the only way, darling," she said. "It was the only thing . . ." She closed her eyes. Her words broke off as a shudder went through her. Then her voice came again, as if from deep inside her soul. *"God, it was horrible!"* Then she began to cry.

Perhaps I had known what was coming from the beginning. I know I couldn't accuse her, because I had wanted the same thing myself. I had tried not to let myself think about murder, but the thought had been there.

She was crying and I put my hand down to comfort her and she reached for me and pulled me down beside her. I would like to say that I resisted, but I didn't. I

guess the mind can blot out anything that it wants to; I know my consciousness blotted out the image of that corpse hanging from the rope in the next room. My lips found hers and they were hot and desperately eager and her fingers were digging into my shoulders and her body was writhing against me and I buried myself in her body and forgot everything else.

Later, we went down to the kitchen and she brewed a pot of coffee and we had several cups with whisky in them. "There's only one thing to do," I said.

She turned quickly and looked at me, a hint of fear flicking across her face.

I smiled, or tried to. "We've got to finish the job you started. And we can't make any mistakes this time. We've got to be sure the police will accept it as suicide."

"I can't go up there again, Frank . . ."

I started to speak and she ran to me, burying her face in my shoulder. "Don't make me, darling," she said. I stroked her hair. "I'll do it," I said. "You stay here and I'll do it."

It didn't take long. I'd spotted most of her mistakes before, and it was mostly a matter of cleaning up. I took the desk chair and put it upright under the body and then kicked it over, as he would have done. Then I typed out a short note on his typewriter, saying I could not go on any longer and I hoped my wife would understand and so forth. I found a paper in his desk that carried his signature and I copied the first name under what I had written, and placed the note on the night table beside his bed. Then I walked back to the door and looked around. The scene was perfect.

After I'd straightened up the bathroom I went back to the kitchen. She was sitting just as I had left her. "Listen carefully, darling," I said. "You've got to do this alone. I can't afford to be here when the police come. You call them now and tell them you just woke up and you found him that way."

I paused, hoping she was enough in control of herself. "You've got to look like a wife who's just found her husband dead." She nodded. her face white. "Can you do it?" I asked.

"Yes, I think so . . ."

"Good," I said. "It will be over soon." I leaned down and kissed her. Then I squeezed her shoulder and turned quickly and went to the door. When I looked back she was watching me. "You'll be all right, darling," I said. "I know you will." She smiled quickly and I smiled back and then I was gone.

When I walked back into my house again it was as if I'd been gone forever. In those few hours I had left one world and entered

another; I'd become almost another person. It frightened me, I'll admit that. But it was too late for fear now. In a few more hours we'd be together again, and this time it would be for good. Everything would be forgotten, and we could start over. I tried to anticipate my happiness, but I couldn't. That will come later, I told myself. We'll go away. We'll make each other happy. We've got to.

Thinking back, I can't remember exactly what I did during the rest of that morning. I know I washed the dishes and cleaned up the kitchen, and then I went into my studio and tried to finish an illustration I'd been working on, but I couldn't concentrate. I went up to my room and lay on my bed, but sleep was impossible. The tension that had started out as a tiny gnawing in my stomach had swollen until I seemed to feel it pressing against my heart; I felt that I would soon lose control of myself, and I knew I had to do something to calm my nerves. So I got out the bottle.

That first drink helped a little but a cup of hot water can't melt an iceberg, so I took another, and another . . . After awhile I was calmed down enough to try and sleep, and this time it worked.

I was still asleep when they came. I didn't even hear them enter the house. I remember I was standing at the end of a long dark hall and I seemed to be tangled in some cobwebs and something large and furry was crawling toward me. And somewhere a voice was calling my name. "Bannerman!" it said. "Mr. Bannerman. Wake up!"

Then the furry thing clutched at me and started shaking and suddenly I could see through the glare of the late afternoon sun that three men were looming over me. Two were wearing police uniforms and the third, who had on a light, rumpled suit and a straw hat, was shaking my shoulder. "He's awake," a voice said.

"What *is* this?" I shouted. I was terrified and my voice came out much too loud. "What do you want?"

"My name's Detective Kaplan," the man in the light suit said, flashing something open that glinted in the sunlight "You'd better come with us now."

I was too fogged with drink and sleep to know exactly what happened, but I do remember shouting and there was a struggle and one of the men jerked my arms around behind me and locked them together, and then they were pushing me toward the door.

When I got outside I expected to see Helen, but she wasn't in the car. I was relieved but afraid, too, and I wanted to ask somebody about her but I didn't know how to phrase it and then I was in the car and we were pulling out of the driveway into the street and I could feel the sickness beginning

in my stomach again and I lay back, hoping it would go away, and I don't remember any more.

When I came around again I was sitting in a hard, straight-backed chair and a goose-neck lamp on a desk was shining directly into my eyes. I blinked and twisted away and a voice from somewhere in the darkness behind the glare said, "I think you can turn that away, now. Mr. Bannerman isn't going to give us any trouble."

A hand came out and pushed the lamp aside and I saw that I was sitting in a bare office. Detective Kaplan was behind the desk and another man in plain clothes was standing near the lamp. Otherwise the room was empty. I looked around wildly. "Where is she?" I asked.

"Who is that, Mr. Bannerman," he said slowly, maddeningly.

"Helen! Helen Morrison!"

"So that's why you killed him."

I leaped out of the chair. "I didn't kill him!" I shouted. "It was suicide!"

The man near the lamp pushed me back into the chair, and Kaplan said, "And how did you know that, Mr. Bannerman?"

I opened my mouth to speak and suddenly realized what I had said. I tried to think, but the pounding in my head was too loud. Where was she? What had she told them?

"Don't feel too bad, Mr. Bannerman," Kaplan said. "We had you anyway. Your prints were all over the place—the chair, the suicide note, the bathroom. And you made an even stupider mistake than that. You left the chair across the room at the desk. He couldn't have kicked it *that* far."

"No! I put it back. I told her . . ."

And then his words suddenly sank in. *The chair had been returned a second time to the desk. She had moved it back!* And, at that moment, the whole bitter picture flashed in front of me. She had done it deliberately! She had intentionally framed me! She had set me up for this, right from the very beginning!

"All right," I said rapidly, "you want the truth, I'll give it to you. I know I broke a lot of laws, but I didn't kill him. She did it and I tried to help her cover up, but that's not the same as murder."

Kaplan beckoned and another man came in with a lined pad and pencil and sat down in the shadows just outside the circle of light. "Okay, Mr. Bannerman," Kaplan said. "Suppose you tell us all about it."

I told them everything, right from the beginning; how she'd struck him and held his head under the water and then dragged his body down the hall and strung him up. I told them what I'd done and why I'd done it. I left out nothing.

I'd been blinded by her, but now I saw everything clearly. Maybe I'd loved her, but I didn't love her any more. I spilled out the whole lousy

story, implicating myself as well as her. I'd go to jail but they'd get her, too. And I wouldn't go to jail for murder.

When I finished Kaplain said, "Thank you, Mr. Bannerman. We'll check it out."

"Don't you believe me?"

He smiled. "Let me just say it's an interesting story."

I tried to fight down a sudden sense of panic. "You've got to believe me! It's the God's honest truth, I swear it is!"

"I don't believe anything until I read it on the front page of the *New York Times,*" Kaplan said drily, "and sometimes not even then." Then they took me out.

I got the news the next morning. I hadn't slept all night and after breakfast Detective Kaplan came in and I half-shouted: "It checked, didn't it? I wasn't lying, you see! It checked!"

"Yes," he said, in the tone one takes with a disobedient child, "just the way *she* told us. Why did you try and pull that drowning story? You should have known we'd examine his lungs during the autopsy. There was no water in them. He didn't drown, and you know it."

I fell back onto my cell cot, barely listening as he talked. The way she told it, they'd had a fight and she'd spent the night with a friend. When she got back around ten, she found him. She knew it was me right away; I'd been after her, I'd been jealous of Charles, I'd been acting crazy lately, she was afraid I'd do something violent.

She'd set me up for everything: motive, opportunity, mistakes I'd make, the works. She had picked me for her private pigeon, and now I was ready for the pie.

But why? That's what I couldn't figure. Why had she rigged things up to make it seem as if he'd drowned? And if he had not drowned, how—and then it hit me.

She had not killed him! There was no murder! *Charles Morrison had killed himself!*

And there could only be one reason why his death had to look like murder: *because the insurance companies don't pay off on suicide!*

I had told her about the claims adjustor who had called me about my wife's death, about the suicide clause. Perhaps that gave her the idea. Perhaps I had unwittingly baited the trap that caught me.

Of course I have told this to the guards, to Kaplan, to anyone who will listen. But they only smile. Why should they believe me? I have no proof, and it's the phoniest alibi I ever heard. Sometimes I can hardly believe it myself.

(Continued from other side)

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